

**SOCIALLY MOBILE UNDERCLASS IN TRANSITIONAL CHINA:  
FACILITATING FACTORS AND EDUCATIONAL  
OPPORTUNITIES OF MIGRANT CHILDREN IN BEIJING**

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## Summery

Migrant children, and the various social issues associated with them, are the result of massive population movement and social transformation in post-reform China. They are frequently depicted as a truly disadvantaged group due to the constraints they face when moving to urban areas. Previous studies have focused on migrant children's educational difficulties and miserable living environments, ascribing their conditions to institutional arrangements as well as migrants' shortage of social, economic, and political capital. Few researchers have paid attention to the positive forces migrant children encounter when they move to cities with their parents in search of a better life.

An ethnographic study of a group of migrant children in Beijing, this thesis systematically explores their life stories and pays close attention to the educational opportunities that migrant children can receive from within their social structures. Social factors related to politics, market forces, and civil society, which can facilitate migrant children's access to opportunities, are mentioned and analyzed. While these factors follow different logics and they provide migrant children with developmental resources in different ways, they share a commonality: all of them work toward improving the living conditions and educational opportunities available to migrant children.

With these supports, migrant children are in a better position to access educational resources in cities. This is a crucial element in their upward social mobility within Chinese society, since educational attainment has become increasingly important in upward social mobility. Moreover, with the involvement of various social actors in their lives, migrant children receive

more chances to interact with various social groups. Considering the fact that most migrant children live in relatively isolated suburban communities on the urban periphery, this is an important factor that promotes their inclusion in mainstream society. This thesis examines the key facilitating forces and analyzes the mechanisms by which different actors are helping to promote migrant children's educational opportunities in contemporary urban China.

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# Chapter One: Introduction

## Migrant Children in Transitional China

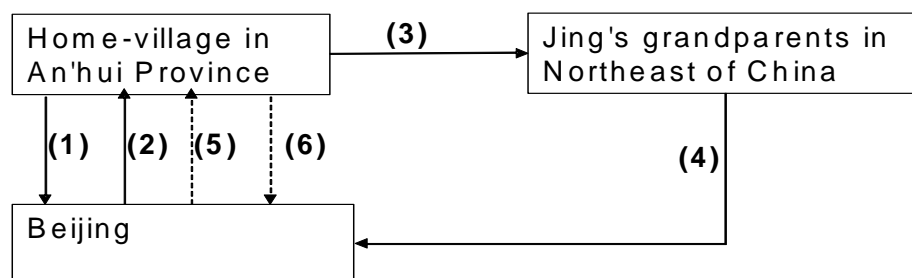
Before I start the theoretical discussions relating to migrant children, I want to introduce them in both qualitative and quantitative ways.

### Qualitative Characteristics of Migrant Children

Literally defined, migrant children are those children who, along with their migrant worker parents, move to cities from their home-villages. In this study, migrant children in Beijing are those who move from their home-villages to Beijing. For some of them, Beijing is the terminal of their movement, however, for others, Beijing is just a stop on their moving ways. Even in Beijing, they are also moving on the way frequently. Jing's (Respondent #21) migrating experience is typical among her peers in the study.

Jing is a 15-year-old girl, and she has been continuously living in Beijing for two years. This was the second time for Jing to live in Beijing with her parents. Chart 1 shows Jing's migrating routes in the past and in the near future. Specifically, routes 1, 2, 3, and 4, showed in real line, are Jing's moving routes in the past five years, and routes 5 and 6, showed in dashed line, are the projected moving routes for Jing according to her parents' plan.

**Chart 1:Jing's Migrating Routes**



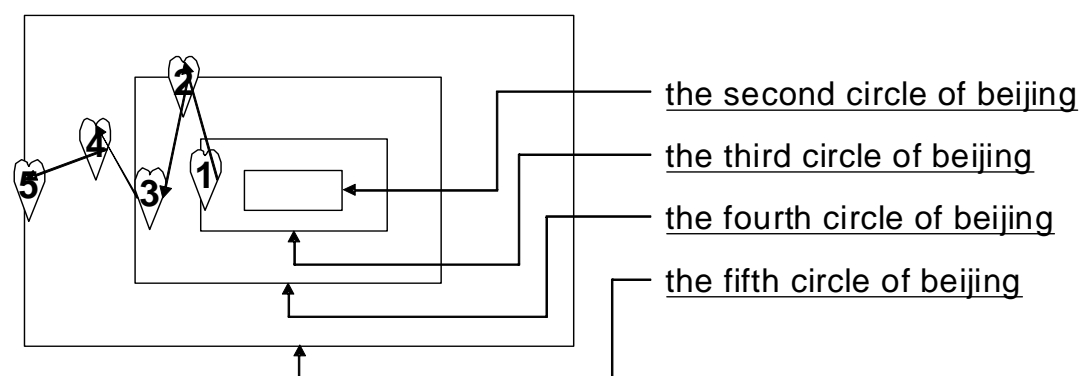
**Source:** Interviews with Jing



Five years ago, Jing's parents, like millions of other Chinese peasants, moved out of their village and migrate to cities in search of better lives. Jing and her younger brother, for the first time, left their village and were taken to Beijing by their parents. It was too difficult for Jing's parents to find decent jobs, and they tried many kinds of jobs when they first arrived in Beijing. Very soon, Jing's parents found out that their earnings cannot afford the "big family" in Beijing, so Jing was sent back to her home-village. Since then, Jing was looked after by her grandparents (her father's parents). One year later, Jing's grandparents were too old to take after her anymore; Jing was sent to another pair of grandparents (her mother's parents) in a village in the northeast of China. Jing lived there for two years, and during this period, her parents only visited her twice. Jing can fully understand her parents' hardship, and she want to repay her parents by studying hard and then earning much money to buy good things for them.

Two years ago, Jing finally re-united with her family in Beijing, and since then Jing's floating life in Beijing started. In the past two years, Jing's family has moved house four times. Chart 2 shows the moving route of her home in Beijing.

**Chart 2: Moving Map of Jing's Family in Beijing**



**Source:** Interviews with Jing

Jing's first living place in Beijing was a small room in a nice community around the west third circle of Beijing. Her parents were the cleaners of that community and the owners of that

community let them live in an empty storage room there. The wage of being cleaners in that community cannot afford the whole family especially when Jing and her younger brother had to go to school.

Two months after Jing's arrival, Jing's mother found a new job in a restaurant around the north fourth circle of Beijing, and her father also found a new job in a construction site nearby. Jing's family thereafter rent a small room near her parents' workplace, and this was Jing's first move in Beijing. She and her younger brother had to transfer to a migrant children school nearby.

Half a year later, a fellow-villager in Beijing introduced cigarette business to Jing's parents, and he also introduced some other fellow-villagers doing cigarette business in Beijing. After serious thinking and discussion, Jing's parents decided to open a small cigarette shop in a suburb village near the west fourth circle of Beijing, where the fee of renting a room was much cheaper than the former place. So Jing experienced her second move of home. One week later, she and her younger brother transferred to another migrant children school near around. Better still, her new school was the best migrant children school in Beijing.

Five months later, Jing's family and her school both had to move out for that area was chosen by the government as the basketball stadium for the coming Beijing Olympic Games in 2008. Jing's fourth home in Beijing situated in a village-in-city western to the west fourth circle, and her school was also near around.

Less than a year later, Jing's family and her school had to move again for the village-in-city was planned to be re-constructed to be a new community by a real estate developer. Actually the area of this village-in-city was no longer a suburb region in Beijing by that time because of the fast urbanization and aggressive expansion of Beijing. The fifth place Jing's family

moved to was a suburb village near the west fifth circle of Beijing. This place was 10 kilometers away from the previous location as Jing's migrant school moved to this village. There were also many other migrant children's families moving there for the same reason.

Jing's migrating life is not over. Now she is in the last year of her primary schooling, so, like many other migrant children, she will face dilemma of staying in Beijing or going back to her home-town for her middle school in the near future. According to Jing's parents' plan, going back to home-village is the first choice, which will influence Jing's future migrating routes.

Apart from frequent movements, Jing's migration story also illustrates some typical characteristics of migrant children in Beijing. I generalized these characteristics based on the life stories of my informants in my study.

### **1. Majority of migrant children have siblings.**

My survey<sup>1</sup> showed that the average number of children per migrant family was 2.95. Among the 22 cases<sup>2</sup> in my study, the average number of children per migrant family was 2.27. Compared to the majority one-child families in Beijing, migrant children's families were big.

### **2. Migrant children's accommodations are usually crowded and bad-facilitated.**

A typical migrant family's home in Beijing is a small simple room in a suburb community where the living cost is much lower than downtown. In 2006, the average price for renting a room in suburb village-in-city communities was 300 yuan, while the average price in downtown was more than 1000 yuan. Most migrant family can only afford the former.

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<sup>1</sup> The survey was conducted during my first field work in Beijing in July, 2006. There were 120 migrant children, aged from 11 to 13, participating in this survey from 5 migrant schools in Beijing. I selected the samples by stratified sampling, and the stratifying variables were age, gender, and home region. The number of valid samples was 120. The questionnaire of the survey is in the appendix in the end of the thesis.

<sup>2</sup> All the profiles of these 22 migrant children are listed detailedly in the appendix.

### **3. Overage in schooling**

Overage in schooling is common for migrant children. Migrant children's study was easily affected by frequent migration and transfer. Jing is an illustration. She was in grade six at 15 years old. While an ordinary 15 years old child in China should be in grade eight. There were 44.50% surveyed migrant children overage in schooling, and the average years of overage were 1.5 years.

### **4. Most migrant children have the experience of separating from parents.**

The ratio of surveyed migrant children who have the experience of separating from parents was 80.20%, and 20 migrant children of the 22 cases in my study have such experience. During the period of separating from their parents, migrant children were usually taken care of by their relatives like grandparents and uncles.

### **5. Strong sense of appreciation to their parents**

"I owe too much to my parents. They work so hard for us. I will study hard to repay them." This is what I hear from most migrant children when they share their life stories with me. They witnessed the hardship their parents experienced, and the experience of separating from parents also make them cherish living with their parents very much.

### **6. High ability of self-independence**

Migrant children are premature in taking care of themselves and in helping parents to run their families. All migrant children I surveyed and interviewed go to school by themselves. All surveyed migrant children do various house works at home.

### **Quantitative Description of Migrant Children**

Migrant children are the by-products of massive rural to urban migration in

contemporary China. The number of migrant children has been increasing with the growing scale of rural to urban migrant workers. The increasing scale of migrant workers in China is shown in table 1.

**Table 1: Changing Number of Migrants and Migrant Children**

	Million						
Year	1978	1982	1989	1993	2000	2005	2006
No. of migrant workers	2	6.57	30	70	144.39	147	150
No. of migrant children	0.4	1.4	6	14	28.8	29	30

**Source:** Research Office in the State Council of China (ROSCC), 2006. *Reporting on the Problems of Chinese Farmer-turned Workers*

CSB<sup>3</sup>, 2000, *The fifth census of China*

CSB, 1993, *The fourth census of China*

CSB, 1982, *The third census of China*

National Population and Family Planning Committee of China, 2006

Moreover, in the last five years, the annual increase in the number of migrant workers was 6 million (ROSCC, 2006). In 2004, the number of migrant workers bringing their families with them was 24.7 million (CSB, 2004). According to the fifth national census of China, of the 100 million migrants, 14 million were migrant children. Among these individuals, 8.8 million were of compulsory school age (6 to 14 years old) (CSB, 2000).

The number of migrant children will increase in the future, owing to the following reasons.

First, the current rural surplus population amounts to about 45 million people. With the development of agricultural mechanization in China, the potential surplus of labor will increase to 200 million (Wang & Ding, 2005). In the last five years, the number of rural laborers increased annually by about 8.5 million; a trend that is expected to continue into the future (CSB, 2005) .

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<sup>3</sup> CSB is the abbreviation for the China Statistics Bureau.

Moreover, it is estimated that the proportion of China's population living in urban areas in 2006 was 38%. This percentage is expected to rise to 65% by around 2050. Rural to urban migration seems like an irreversible trend, and tremendous numbers of migrants are expected to continue flocking into urban areas, especially the largest cities. Correspondingly, the number of migrant children in the future will also increase drastically.

Second, left-behind children (those who do not migrate with their parents but live at home with one parent or other relatives, such as grandparents, aunts and uncles) will become migrant children in the future. In 2000, there were an estimated 22.9 million left behind children, the majority of whom (around 83%) were living in rural areas (CSB, 2000). Moreover, due to the lack of parental attention and supervision, the situation faced by many left behind children was deplorable. As a result, an increasing trend will be the migration of children to cities in order to live with their parents (Duan and Zhou, 2005). In essence, the multitude of children currently left behind is a reservoir of future migrant children.

Third, the birth potential of young, unmarried migrants is huge, and they are expected to contribute to the number of migrant children in the future. In 2003, the percentage of migrants less than 40-years-old was 85.9% and of this group 47.3% were young migrants, less than 25-years-old. Although family migration is increasing, single individuals still make up the majority of migrants. The percentage of unmarried migrants was recorded as 20.3% in 2001 (CSB, 2001), but this percentage did not take unregistered migrants into calculation. It is estimated that in the near future a large number of migrants will enter their marrying and childbearing ages and their children are likely to be migrant children.

## **Relative Issues of Migrant Children**

### ***1. Migrating V.S. Left-behind***

During the early years of massive migration, few migrants took their children with them to cities or places of employment (Jialing, 2001). One reason was that most migrants could not afford the urban living expenses for their children, nor accommodate them. Another reason was that there were suitable people to take care of their children in their home villages. At that time, only one parent typically left to find outside work, while the other parent, usually the mother, would stay at home doing farm work and family chores.

Since the 1990s however, increasing peasants chose to move to cities together as couples, which leads childcare becoming a real logistical problem (Duan & Liang, 2004). There are generally two responses to this problem. The first is to leave children with other relatives (Hao, 2001), such as grandparents, uncles, and aunts. These children are known as “left-behind children,” and their living situations are generally not desirable for the lack of parental supervision (Duan and Zhou, 2005). The other response is for parents to take their children along with them, making their children “migrant children,” who are at least under the guidance and supervision of their parents.

Generally speaking, the migrants who take their children with them can be categorized into two groups. One group comprises of individuals who have been working or doing business in cities for a relatively long time and have reasonably strong economic capacity. These individuals can assure their children a decent life and high-quality education. The other group of individuals represents those who have no choice but to bring their children with them for lack of suitable childcare in their rural hometowns. In these cases, the migrants face the dilemma of turning their

child into a left-behind child or a migrant child.

## **2. Adaptation to Cities**

Adaptation to destinations is a popular area of investigation in the field of migration study (Aronowits, 1984; Garza, 2004; Richard and Georgia, 2003; Zhou, 1997). Migration, especially international migration, involves drastic changes in living environments, and immigrants find that they must adapt themselves to new and different cultures. As Wittkower and Fried (1958: 245) articulated:

“Individuals in transition from one culture to another increase the probability of behavioral disorders, because the traditional bonds of practices and values that hold families and communities together are disrupted. If the immigrant children hold onto their heritage, they are likely to experience ... depreciation and alienation from the dominant society. If, on the other hand, they abandon their old cultural values... they run the risk of alienation and rejection from their own subculture without being assured of membership in the new culture.”

Migrant children commonly fail to adapt to their destination society due to cultural and structural disadvantages. They are always described as a marginalized group, who “has been constructed in a way that locks them in a perpetuating cycle of failure” (Garza, 2004: ix).

However, a newly executed ethnographic study about this stereotypically-defined group revealed a surprising outcome: migrant children are not necessarily vulnerable to the society that they migrate to (Garza, 2004). Garza’s research comprised case studies of three migrant children. Each of them has achieved amazing academic and career success within their destination society, which was previously depicted as a detrimental environment for their development. After extensive investigation of their life experiences, lifestyles, family supports and constraints, schools, environmental resources, and their personal characteristics, Garza (2004) convincingly argued that migrant children can become successful in a new society, and that their fates are not determined, but are constructed in their everyday lives. Garza’s points contradicted the dominant theory that



cultural and structural elements are completely deterministic factors for disadvantaged groups.

Garza's study calls for more attention to the dynamic everyday lives of knowledgeable migrant children, whose fates are not passively determined by their social structures, but are actively and intentionally shaped by their utilization of life opportunities within their social settings.

### **3. Education of Migrant Children**

Studies focusing on migrant children in contemporary China are mostly concerned with the obstacles these children face in accessing high quality education, comparable to that of native-born urban children (Jialing, 2001). The issue of educational inequality is usually investigated by focusing on the causes for educational discrepancies among migrant children (Duan and Liang, 2004), the type of education they receive in urban areas (Zhou, 2005), or policy suggestions on how to improve the quality of their education (Zhou & Chen, 2004).

Regarding the causes of educational discrepancies, institutional arrangements and migrant workers' financial constraints are usually listed as primary factors. Institutions are mainly concerned with the household registration system, which divides China's population into two categories, rural or urban residents. Another institutional barrier comes in the form of the educational system's policies, which insist that a migrant child's home government is responsible for his or her education (Bonian, 2002). In other words, migrant children have no right to the educational services provided in cities where they are currently living, but only in the place where they were born. As a result of this policy, migrant children must pay high fees if they want to study in urban public schools.

Most migrant children's parents are working in the lowest level of the labor market and receive the lowest incomes (Qiang, 2004). For these families high tuition presents a barrier to

quality education. In essence, the gate to public schooling is closed to migrant children. In practice, a growing sector of private schools, geared specifically toward migrant children, fills the gap left by public schools (Duan and Liang, 2004). The educational quality and safety of these schools cannot be assured and many studies have concluded that conditions in these migrant children's schools are substandard (Jialing, 2003; Shukai, 2000; Lv and Zhang, 2005). But, some migrant workers still feel that "it will be better for our children to study in such schools than to wander on the street."

## **Social Background of Migrant Children**

### **Rural-Urban Migration**

Migration involves the more or less permanent movement of individuals or groups across symbolic or political boundaries into new residential areas and communities. Migration is generally divided into internal migration, moving within a country, and international migration, moving out of one country and into another. So, the term, *migrants*, refers to people who leave their home to inhabit another place and make a living there.

The movement of migrants in contemporary China represents internal migration, as most people migrate from less developed villages and inland areas to better developed coastal regions and large, central cities (Shen, 2003). Unlike international migrants, migrants in China theoretically need not adapt to a different culture, so their lives in destination places should be easier (Qiang, 2004). However, with the operation of a household registration system, most migrants, and especially rural to urban migrant workers, cannot enjoy complete citizenship in their destination places (Goldman & Elizabeth).

Institutionally speaking, there are three types of migrants in urban China. First, some

individuals migrate to destination places with the successful transference of their household registration. These individuals are legal citizens of their destination places allowing them the full benefits of citizenship there. Second, there are migrants who cannot get a formal *hukou*<sup>4</sup> in their destination place but manage to obtain a Temporary Residential Certificate (*Zhanzhuzheng*). These individuals are not treated as citizens in their destination cities and they are discriminated against in many aspects, such as in employment, social security, and housing. Despite the fact that their residence in cities is officially sanctioned by the government, and that they are legally permitted to work, they are not true institutional residents for the lack of a permanent *hukou* (Treiman, 2002). Third, there is also a large group of individuals who migrate to cities without obtaining permanent *hukou* and even without registering as temporary residents. According to migration regulations they are illegal, so the government has no responsibility for their quality of life in cities. They are discriminated against in schooling, housing, and even reputation.

Practically speaking, individuals from the first category mentioned are not treated as migrants in Chinese cities because of their privileged institutional status. They are treated as permanent residents and rarely come across the same constraints in their lives that other groups of migrants typically face. Moreover, migrant people with permanent *hukou* in urban destinations are not counted as migrants in national and regional censuses or surveys.

### **Social Stratification in Transitional China**

Since the beginning of market-oriented reform in 1978, China has undergone tremendous social transformations including high speed urbanization, industrialization, and modernization (Nee, 1989; 1996; Walder, 1989). The country has become more developed and complex, and the

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<sup>4</sup> *Hukou* refers to the household registration system, which artificially divides Chinese people into different categories based on the place they were born and the identification of their parents. *Hukou* system is the basis of citizen's welfare, such as employment, education, medicine, etc.

citizens, highly stratified (Bian, 2002; Walder, 1996). Reform and open policy has transformed China from a highly egalitarian society into a rather unequal, polarized society, meanwhile, a great number of underclass<sup>5</sup> people have appeared (Wu, 2004).

Before the reform, egalitarianism was the primary social mission, and equality was seen as paramount to efficiency. With the arrival of marketization, increasing social resources have been released from the control of the state, and are instead being distributed according to market logic<sup>6</sup> (Nee, 1989). At the same time, ‘equality after efficiency’ has become the principle motto of the government.

One direct result of this transformation is an increasing gap between different social classes. Chinese society has become one of the most inequitable in the world (Qiang, 2005). According to a report from the World Bank, the Gini-coefficient in China has increased from 0.16 in 1978 to 0.452 in 1994, and is now nearly 0.5, which means that Chinese society is seriously polarized. A massive underclass has appeared with the polarization in China, and it is composed of rural to urban migrants, peasants, and laid-off workers within state-owned enterprises (Sun, 2002a).

With increasing social inequality in transitional China, the structures and mechanisms of social stratification have become more and more complex. Lu Xueyi (2001) proposed a ten-stratum social structure model to analyze social structure in China. He also pointed out that there is a tendency of social stratification structures toward stabilization, and that it will be increasingly difficult for people from the underclass to achieve upward social mobility in the

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<sup>5</sup> The term underclass (*diceng*, or literally the low class) is now widely used in China. Underclass is a concept that has many definitions, but in this thesis it refers to those who are unemployed or informally employed and have a low standard of living (Sun, 2002a).

<sup>6</sup> “Logic”, which is a term used by various disciplines, has many meanings, but in this thesis, it refers to the way or the mechanism of working

future. Lu (2002) attributed the stabilization tendency to the coalition of people from upper classes, who are society's political, commercial, and academic elites. These elites control the majority of the social resources and situate themselves in advantaged positions within market and governmental institutions.

Sun Liping (2002b) argued that the structure of Chinese society has been cracked and misbalanced. He pointed out that people from different classes are removed from each other physically and emotionally, and that there are not enough transitional social strata connecting the polarized upper and under classes. Sun (2002b) also proposed the concept of the "associated-elite" to describe the coalition of political, economical, and cultural elites inhabiting society's upper classes. According to Sun (2002b), associated-elites are those who take up all kinds of social resources, and enjoy positions of multiple advantages.

Similar to Sun's argument, Li Lulu (2003) argued that the class structure of China has fragmented the population, and that class boundaries between the different fragments are hard to transcend.

As for the mechanisms of social stratification in transitional China, there are basically two contrasting arguments used to explain how social resources are allocated and how an individual's class position is determined. One is market transition theory, which was developed and introduced by Victor Nee (1989; 1996) and others. Nee and Chao argue that Chinese society will become increasingly open, and that redistributive power will be replaced by market power in allocating social resources and in determining social class structure. The social stratification structure of transitional China will be transformed from one that is administration-centered to one that is market-centered, and the attainment of human capital, such as education, skills, and

economic capital, will be the crucial factors in determining a person's social position.

The other argument, originally proposed by Bian (1996; 2002) and Zhou (2002), was that social transformation in post-reform China had not challenged the dominance of administrative power in allocating social resources, but conversely had increased its dominance in many areas. At the same time, these scholars admitted that market factors had been playing a more central role in the allocation of resources and in the dynamics of the social stratification formulation.

To sum up, there are currently two coexisting logics used popularly to explain the allocation of social resources in contemporary China – market logic and administrative logic.

### **Underclass Migrants in Transitional China**

Underclass people, in the current Chinese context, generally comprise rural to urban migrants, laid-off urban workers, and retirees deprived of pensions during the reform (Qing, 2002). Underclass people are truly disadvantaged in economic, social, cultural, and political aspects, and they are marginalized from mainstream society (Sun, 2002b: 22):

*“For most of them, firstly, there is no hope of returning to the major economic activities of the society; secondly, under the present situation it is impossible for them to return to the system of stable employment; thirdly, the new economic sectors do not provide job opportunities for them; they are becoming a group outside the social structure.”*

In the pre-reform era, Chinese citizens were ascribed rigid *urban* and *rural* labels, and enjoyed different citizenships based on their household registration statuses (Cheng and Mark, 1994). Since then, urban citizens have enjoyed comprehensive welfare provided by the government, such as public housing, free medical treatment, lifelong employment, and free education, while rural peasants have been deprived of these rights. Peasants are even deprived of the right to migrate. They are confined to the villages where they are born (Solinger, 1999c). Rural people can rarely move out of their villages, except through military or educational channels (Bian,

2002). As a result of this duality, social stratification has traditionally followed the same line as the rural to urban dichotomy.

In fact, China's rural population has actually comprised an underclass since before the reform period and has continued to find itself in a deprived position, incapable of upward social mobility (Walder, 1989). These individuals' life chances are pre-determined even before their births, and almost all of them are forced to be farmers and second class citizens. Through this divisive policy, the state has successfully set up a rigid social closure system (Qiang, 2004), which has assured the wellbeing of urban residents and the stability of urban areas by excluding farmers' correspondent citizenship (Solinger, 1999c) .<sup>7</sup>

Under the rigid rural to urban dichotomous regime, a considerable proportion of the Chinese population was confined to villages as laborers. This population far exceeded the demand for agricultural workers, so there was great amount of surplus labor in rural areas (Wong, 1994). Before the reform, some pioneers tried to move out of their villages in order to illegally pursue a living through non-rural enterprises, such as running small businesses, working as temporary laborers, and so on. Post-reform policies legitimized these rural entrepreneurs and subsequently triggered a massive rural to urban migration pattern (Solinger, 1999a). This in effect offered rural surplus labor the chance to pursue a better living outside the confines of their villages.

China employed a gradual reform strategy (Goldstein, 1995), and the long existing institutions did not disappear immediately. The increased mobility of farmers was an improvement,

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<sup>7</sup> The rationale of this policy is that the urban areas could not accommodate huge numbers of surplus laborers from the rural areas. Chinese industrialization at that time was so limited that non-agricultural sectors could not create enough job vacancies. The Chinese government believed that unlimited people rushing to the cities without formal jobs would cause serious social problems, which could harm social stability.

but far from the complete acquisition of citizenship rights afforded to urban residents (Solinger, 1999a). Actually, the government still maintained tight controls on farmers' mobility in particular, and citizenship in general, by maintaining the national household registration system (*hukou*), which was used to allocate state-controlled resources and services. Migrants were excluded from enjoying these resources and services because of their lack of *hukou* in cities (Zhang & Kam, 1999).

Moreover, migrants could only take jobs offering substandard working conditions and lower pay than those available to urban residents. Practically speaking, the cheap labor offered by the massive wave of migrant workers has been a relative advantage to China in global market competition (Solinger, 1999a). China has employed an export oriented development strategy and has become the world's factory with its cheap urban labor. As a result, China has been benefiting greatly from the disadvantaged position of rural to urban migrants, which is why the government is reluctant to improve the treatment of migrants (Wong, 1994).

Migrants are welcomed to the cities for their contributions to economic development, but are unwelcome in that they put pressure on urban facilities, and consume resources, which were earmarked for the enjoyment of urban residents (Solinger, 1999c). Massive rural to urban migration and fast urbanization in China have also made most of the cities, especially the largest ones, overpopulated. For the sake of social stability and urban residents' welfare, the government does not want to see the number of migrants in cities increase. Maintaining migrants' miserable living conditions and depriving them of equal status citizenship slows the tide of rural to urban migration.

Therefore, institutionally and practically speaking, migrants in urban China still belong to



an underclass due to their political, social, economic, and even educational disadvantages. They are also expected to remain an underclass for the sake of economic and political processes, even though this often sustains their position of inequality and personal miseries.

## **Research Questions**

Migrant children are the byproducts of the dramatic social transformation, and they were also depicted as the sacrifices of Chinese reform. Existing studies on migrant children are mostly focused on the negative factors that contributing to the miserable situations of migrant children in cities. The positive aspects of migrant children are seldom discussed.

However, in this study I want to explore the positive side of the lives of migrant children, that is, the social supporting system of them. The following are the research questions addressed in the study.

- i. What are the facilitating forces in enhancing educational opportunities of migrant children?**
- ii. What are the educational opportunities for migrant children brought by these forces?**
- iii. Why and how do these forces promote migrant children's educational opportunities?**

## **Overview of the Thesis**

Chapter two deals with the methodology of this study. Chapters three to Chapter five discuss various supporting forces for migrant children in three different realms of transitional China. Specifically, Chapter three examines the facilitating forces from different levels of Chinese government; Chapter four explores the supporting forces embedded in the market sector; while Chapter five describes and analyzes the efforts from the emerging civil society. In the concluding

Chapter six, the contribution and the implications of the study are discussed with respect to social mobility in transitional China. The suggestions for further study are also covered in Chapter six.

## **Chapter Two: Methodology**

### **Research Strategy**

The choice of research methodology is determined by the purpose of the study and the characteristics of the subjects.

The objective of this study is to explore the supporting forces in migrant children's lives. Specifically, this study seeks to address the research questions discussed in introduction chapter: What are the supporting factors of migrant children? How do these factors work in supporting migrant children? What are the effects of these factors on migrant children?

The objective of the study entails the exploration of the everyday lives of migrant children. This thesis is based on an ethnographic study of a group of migrant children between 11- and 15-years-old in a migrant school in Beijing. Twenty-two migrant children were selected as subjects for detailed investigation. Selected migrant children's life stories and experience within their families, schools, and communities were intensively investigated. The findings and arguments were generalized from their experiences.

Using ethnographic method, I could study migrant children in various ways, such as going to their homes, entering the communities where they dwell, visiting public schools or migrant schools, and even observing them on the street. However, I have to employ a proper way to enter migrant children's lives.

I chose the migrant school as my entering point into the lives of migrant children. The followings were the reasons.

First, since most of the migrant children are school age, entering their schools was a

convenient way to gain access to them. Although some migrant children have difficulties attending schools in urban areas, the majority of them are enrolled in schools. According to a survey concerning migrant children in Beijing in 1997, more than 90% of the migrant children surveyed were enrolled in a primary or secondary schools. Entering schools could thus provide the researcher with opportunities to approach different types of migrant children. Migrant schools are exclusively for migrant children, so almost all their students are migrant children.

Second, migrant schools are more open and responsive to outsiders than public schools. Migrant schools are usually founded by literate migrant workers, whose resources are so limited that they are in great need of social support. For example, most migrant schools need university students to volunteer as part-time teachers in order to make up for their shortage of teaching staff. They also desire to draw broad social attention to their difficulties.

Third, migrant schools, to some extent, are the hinges between migrant children and the larger society.

Fourth, migrant schools are mostly located in the suburbs of Beijing, where migrants live, so it was convenient for me to visit students' nearby neighborhoods and families.

For the above reasons, I decided to work as a voluntary teacher in a migrant school. In this position I was able to build trust and make connections with migrant children. Teaching provided me with an acceptable role to enter into their communities and their families. As a teacher, I got to break various social barriers in migrant children's other living spaces, such as families, communities, peers groups, etc.

## **Subjects**

In this study, migrant children aged between 11- and 15-years-old are the subjects under

investigation. All the children selected in this study were in their final year of primary school, which was a critical time for them. They were in the process of choosing the secondary schools they would like to attend the following year.

The first reason I chose to study children in this age range is based on educationally significant considerations. Children in this age range (11-15) are usually enrolled in secondary schools. In China, if a child can not successfully finish secondary school, there is little chance that he or she will go on to higher education. This is significant because education is practically the only route for underclass children to move up the social ladder.

Another reason for choosing this age range is the consideration that children between 11 and 15 belong to one of the most impressionable groups. Their mindsets and values are being formed by their experiences. The socialization they experience in this period is a critical determinant for their future lives. Furthermore, the cognitive level of children in this group is higher than that of younger children; this is very important in obtaining credible answers in my interviews.

Participants in this study were selected intentionally, with respect to differentiation among migrant children. I picked my subjects of study based on their age, gender, native origins, academic performance, number of siblings, number of years dwelling in Beijing, and parents' economic status. There are also some outlier types of participants, such as those with serious delinquency issues and those whose academic performance is superior to students in the best public schools.

The differentiation between subjects provides a basis for comparative analysis. At the same time, the schooling environments and community conditions of these cases are highly

homogeneous, so the validity of comparisons will be relatively high.

## **The Setting**

My research was conducted in a community in a suburb of Beijing, where most migrant children are living in rented rooms. Their migrant schools and recreational resources are also situated in this community.

The community, comprising three villages, is isolated on the rim of Beijing's fast developing Haidian district. It was once a rural region, but now almost all the farms are undergoing rapid urbanization. It is urbanization that brought prosperity as well as an overwhelming number of migrants to this area. This process is apparent in the crowded roads, tall buildings and shops, increasing number of simple shelters, and rising housing prices. As a newly developed area, the living costs in this community are relatively lower than those in the inner city. Spartan rental rooms accommodate large number of migrants due to their low quality, small space, and therefore relatively low costs. The majority of residents in these rental rooms are migrants.

After losing their farms, local residents were offered with urban *hukou*, land compensation and social security from the government. They enjoy a privileged position as local residents and generally can find ample opportunities within the market. For example, local residents can construct simple rooms in their houses and yards and rent them out to augment their income. With subsidies and their rental income, local residents are generally financially secure and more affluent than migrants. They are the most influential and wealthy people in this community although they are in the minority compared with migrants.

Migrants, on the other hand, are the renters in this community, so they are welcomed by their landlords. However, the arrival of migrants also makes the community much crowded, dirty,

noisy, and prone to crime, so they are frequently mistrusted by local residents. According to current *hukou* system, migrants are required to get temporary permits in order to reside in cities legally. Most migrants do not have any such official documents, so they cannot get adequate assistance from destination government. Moreover, migrants are also discriminated against by house owners.

Facilities in the community were only designed to meet the demands of local residents, so they were unable to cope with so many immigrants. The overload on facilities leads to miserable living conditions in terms of hygiene, security, and population density. There are few cultural facilities, such as bookstores, museums, parks, cinemas or recreational centers, available to residents in these former rural communities. As a result, the migrants' residential area resembles a slum. Fortunately, the local government, local residents, and migrants themselves are trying to improve the physical and organizational conditions of this community.

## **Data Collection**

In an ethnographic study, the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection. By conducting my study in this way, I collected data by every means I could, both in and out of the field. Various data collection methods were employed and a myriad of informants involved. All through the data collection process, migrant children and their everyday lives were the foci.

### ***1. Interviews***

I conducted interviews with migrant children as well as other relevant social actors, including migrant children's parents, teachers, headmasters, and classmates and friends. Before the interviews, I had been a volunteer teacher in a migrant school for some time. During that period I befriended migrant children, their teachers and their headmasters after days of intensive

interaction inside and outside the classroom. I also selected suitable subjects from my students based on considerations of age, gender, academic performance, number of siblings, and years in Beijing. All the interviews with migrant children were conducted in my office after school time. These interviews were semi-structured and tape-recorded. All the informants agreed to be tape-recorded prior to the interviews. The length of the interviews with selected migrant children was one and a half hours, and each subject was interviewed twice, at different times.

Interviews with teachers were also conducted in my office at the end of the work day. These interviews were also semi-structured and tape-recorded with participants' consent. There were 6 teachers involved in the interviews. Interviews with headmasters were conducted in their offices and were also semi-structured and tape-recorded with prior consent.

Interviews with migrant children's parents were conducted during my visits to their homes. I took on the role of their children's teacher as well as a researcher. Before the interviews, I informed parents about my intentions and the role. As their children's teacher, I built rapport by discussing their children's performance in school. All interviews with migrant children's parents were semi-structured and tape-recorded with their consent, and the length of interviews was 2 hours.

## ***2. Survey***

I conducted a survey on migrant children in 5 migrant schools in order to learn the general profiles of migrant children. Surveying on migrant children is also to ascertain whether the cases in the study are representative. There were 120 migrant children, aged from 11 to 13, participating in this survey. All informants come from 5 migrant schools in Beijing. I selected the samples by stratified sampling, and the stratifying variables were age, gender, and home region. The number



of valid samples was 120. The questionnaire of the survey is in the appendix of this thesis.

### ***3. Participant Observations***

As Weber (1981) argues, social research needs to engage in understanding, or *Verstehen* of the everyday lived experience of people in specific historical settings. To grasp the subjective consciousness or intent of the actor from the inside, participant observation as a tool is essential (Schwandt, 2000: 191). Participation observation is a strategy for both “listening” to people and “watching” them in natural settings. In my field study, the observation method was frequently used when I was interacting with migrant children in and out of schools, when I was visiting their homes, and when I was present in their community.

### ***4. Unobtrusive Records***

As a voluntary teacher in a migrant school, I had access to students’ compositions and writings, which were the expressions of their experiences and thoughts. Fortunately, I also had the chance to organize a writing contest for students with the title ‘my history,’ which revealed much about their mobility experiences in coming to Beijing and entering schools.

Moreover, official documents, such as central and local governments’ regulations and policies on migrant children, reflect part of the institutional structures for migrant children. I have collected all the policies and regulations concerning migrant children in Beijing in the past ten years. Content analysis and discourse analysis of these documents is meaningful for making sense of the difficult but improving institutional situations of migrant children.

### ***5. Media Coverage***

The media play a very important role in migrant children’s issues, and it is through reports in the media that most non-migrant individuals first become aware of, and concerned for,

the situations of migrant children. Additionally, the media in China is the voice of the government and the content in Chinese media is highly regulated by the government. As a result, it is possible to understand the government's attitudes through media reporting. Discourse analysis of the Chinese media's coverage is meaningful when reading policy directions toward migrant children.

## **Data Analysis**

Data analysis is the process of making sense of collected data, and it is also the process of embedding data into the context from which they were collected (Richards, 2005). Data from interviews, observations, and other sources have been sorted and analyzed with the assistance of Nvivo7<sup>8</sup>, which fortunately can process Chinese characters. Moreover, discourse and content analyses are used against the backdrop of the social contexts in making sense of the qualitative data before and after the emergence of themes under the operation of Nvivo7. Data from the survey of migrant children are processed with the assistance of SPSS.

## **Process to Increase the Validity of the Study: Data Triangulation**

Triangulation refers to “the use of at least three, but preferably multiple studies, theoretical perspectives, investigators, and data-sets for research on one issue or theme. In particular, the combined use of micro-level and macro-level studies, using each to complement and verify the other, in order to achieve robust research results”<sup>9</sup>. “Data triangulation allows the investigation of this study to bring to bear different data sources and gathering techniques on the evidence and discover potential errors.” (Denzin, 1978, 39)

At the methodological level, any one method's weakness can be avoided by using a

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<sup>8</sup> NVivo7 is a program which can efficiently analyze qualitative data, including Chinese characters; it has outstanding capacity in constructing relationships among qualitative variable.

<sup>9</sup> The Oxford Dictionary of Sociology, Oxford University Press, 2006, Page 67

second method. For this reason I employed multiple methods in collecting data, such as interviews, survey, observations, unobtrusive records, and media reports. Triangulation provides a method for checking data accuracy. I was prompted to conduct a random survey of migrant children in order to check the ability of selected cases to accurately represent data trends.

At the level of data collection, I employed multiple strategies to gather data centered on migrant children, for instance, I have data on how migrant children conduct themselves or reflect their status, as well as data showing how significant and related others, such as their parents, classmates, and teachers think of subjects. Moreover, data from interviews can be cross-checked by comparing it with observational data.

I used the method of thick description to “allow the reader to make decisions regarding transferability because the writer described in detail the participants or setting under study” (Denzin, 1978). This method allows the reader to transfer the information provided to other people, places or times with similar characteristics. This naturalistic generalization may help the reader to make “informed decisions about to whom the results may be generalized. [The reader] will also have the information [he or she] will need if they decide to replicate the research study with new participants” (Denzin, 1978).

### **Limitations of the Study Design**

This study was limited to one small group of migrant children in Beijing, and the main method of research was ethnographic investigation of their everyday lives within their social structures. As a result, the inferences and generalizations of the findings and arguments in this study are limited and require further exploration in future.

All the subjects were selected non-randomly based on gender, places of origin, type of

school, number of siblings, years in Beijing, and academic performance at that time. This focused selection procedure was intended to help me gather data that reflects the differentiation within a population of migrant children. As a result, the generalizations drawn from my findings are representative of one population of migrant children. Future investigation could employ random population samplings to test the true saliency of migrant children's experiences in China.

The analysis and interpretation of the findings are limited by the researcher's assumptions, biases, perspectives, and experiences.

## **Ethics**

The importance of observing ethical guidelines is now well-recognized in social science research, and reflects a commitment to responsible inquiry, especially with regard to disadvantaged communities. The Department of Sociology, National University of Singapore has issued a set of ethical guidelines, which inform research practice. In the context of my research, there are two main areas where this ethical protocol comes into play; informed consent, and anonymity or protecting the confidentiality of informants.

Informed consent refers to the principle that, as far as possible, informants or those being studied should be made aware of the purposes of the research and the research outcomes (e.g. dissemination and publication). Based on this knowledge, informants are then able to make informed decisions about volunteering information and data. The protection of confidentiality and anonymity, on the other hand, offers informants the assurance that if they do volunteer sensitive information or provide information that may place them at risk, that they be offered anonymity in order to avoid harm during the dissemination and publication process.

In this study, I communicated my identity as a researcher, the assurance of anonymity, the

confidentiality of privacies, and the intentions of my study to all the informants. All personal names and locations have been changed to protect anonymity. The names referred to in this study are not real.

At the same time, I also acted as a teacher of migrant children in this study. The benefits of being a participant in the lives of migrant children were discussed in the Research Strategy section, but there are also some possible negative effects. For example, the informants may maneuver the information provided to me by considering my role as a teacher, therefore, the objectivity of the data collected from interviews with migrant children and their parents may be compromised.

## Chapter Three: Support from the Government

### Introduction

The policies regulating issues relevant to migrant children in transitional China are somewhat contradictory (Lu, 2005). On the one hand, some institutions, household registration system for example, prescribe that migrant children's home government is responsible for their welfare. Accordingly, the destination government is not responsible for the education of migrant children. On the other hand, some other relevant policies and institution state that it is the destination government that should take the responsibility of educating migrant children, while migrant children's home government should do their best to cooperate with the destination government to regulate migrant children from its territory.

**Table 2: Laws and Regulations Concerning Migrant Children in China**

Name	Year	Key content
The law of compulsory education	1986	Home government should be responsible for educating migrant children.
Tentative regulations on the compulsory education of migrant children in urban areas	1996	Both home government and destination government are responsible for compulsory education of migrant children.
Temporary regulations on the education of migrant children	1998	Destination government can permit simple migrant schools to help to educate migrant children.
Views on better educating migrant children	2003	Destination government take the prime responsibility of educating migrant children, and public schools in destination cities should be the prime channels in enrolling migrant children.

**Notes:** All these laws and regulations are working simultaneously even though they are inconsistent in some critical aspects.

In reality, various governmental sectors are active in providing social welfare to migrant children: the Central Government, migrant children's home government, and destination

government<sup>10</sup>. The ways these actors work in supporting migrant children as well as their considerations to the children's lives will be analyzed in the following sections of this chapter.

### **The Central Government's efforts and their Effect**

Facing widening inequality after decades of market reform, the new generation of Chinese leaders propagates the value of a 'harmonious society', which entails more attention to the marginalized population (Nickum, 2003). In line with this political and ideological climate, Premier Wen visited a migrant children's school in 2006 and brought the nation's attention to migrant children. Wen's action involved many symbolic and political meanings, and different social actors interpret it in different ways based on their own viewpoints, stances and interests.

For the Central Government as well as Wen himself, the visit to a migrant children's school was a high-profile political performance, which provided the public with an image of the government's care for marginalized people, thus adding to the perceived moral legitimacy of the government. Another implicit benefit for Premier Wen, as well as for the Central Government, was establishing an example of care for migrant children. His behavior served as a model for low level cadres all over the country (Dreyer, 1993), especially those who were previously hesitant to act, encouraging them to fully implement central policies concerning migrant children's issues.

With symbolic pressure from the Central Government, the Beijing government responded with more active policies aimed at serving migrant children. Public schools in Beijing were encouraged to do their best to enroll migrant children in the same way they enroll local children. Existing migrant children's schools in Beijing were regulated resulting in the closing of poorly equipped schools and more assistance given to good-conditioned ones. The Beijing government

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<sup>10</sup> In this study, destination government refers to Beijing government.

promised to earmark a bigger portion of the municipal budget for educating and serving migrant children.

The effects of the Beijing government's efforts are obvious and significant. Thanks to active involvement from the Beijing government, many qualified migrant schools, including XZ Migrant School, have registered as legal educational institutions. These migrant schools have also received substantial financial and technical subsidies from the education department. The teachers in these schools were included in numerous training programs meant for teachers in public schools. Some migrant children were also able to enroll in public secondary schools after their graduation from migrant primary schools. As Headmaster Li of one migrant children school put it:

“With the visit of Premier Wen, the spring of migrant schools is coming. The conditions of our schools have become better with help from the government, who is really our biggest ally. Take my school for example; the Haidian district government has spent 1 million [RMB] on the improvement of physical facilities during the summer holiday, and our teachers also received training from the educational department. Their performances are much better than before with the skills they learned, and more importantly the encouragement from the government they received. Moreover, 200 students from our school have received scholarships from CYDF<sup>11</sup> preventing them from dropping out of school due to familial financial situations. Now, I feel more confident than before when investing in my school.” (Informant #25, May, 2006)

Responses from migrant children's home governments were also active, just as a trade union cadre from Henan province illustrated:

“Premier Wen's actions and words confirmed and acknowledged our efforts in protecting our migrants in Beijing as well other places. We were also greatly encouraged to work harder. Since cadres in Beijing are working to protect our migrants, I feel the growing attention from our provincial and municipal leaders, and they visit our office more frequently than before. This is a reasonable reaction, for it is a good way for them to show their loyalty to central party leaders. I also

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<sup>11</sup> CYDF (the abbreviation of China Youth Development Foundation) is the biggest official charity foundation responsible for the management of the Hope Project, which is aimed at improving the education of children in poor areas. It is registered in the Civil Affairs Ministry of China and is supervised by the China Communist Youth League.



benefit from this, for my position seems more important than before. Now I am trying to set up trade unions in migrant schools which are founded by Henan migrants, and my local political leaders have to accept this; yes, it is also important to help migrant children.” (Informant #32, July, 2006)

China Youth Development Foundation (CYDF) introduced migrant children into the Hope Project. A cadre in CYDF even expressed that “entering cities is a milestone for the Hope Project and this was the demand of this era, and also followed the spirits of the Central Government”.

Access to the Hope Project would improve migrant children’s living condition and educational chances, especially for those from relatively poor families. As the most influential charity organization in China, CYDF can mobilize resources from all over the world to help migrant children in many ways, such as providing education fees for poor students, helping to improve migrant schools’ facilities, and offering training to their teachers.

One of the efforts from CYDF is to work through migrant schools. For example, the XZ migrant school was responsible for distributing 200 scholarships of 600RMB each to the students with the most excellent academic performance, and scholarships of 500RMB to 300 students from poor families. Poor migrant children, especially those with good grades, are the biggest beneficiaries of this program. Under this program, many students were prevented from dropping out of schools. Moreover, CYDF also cooperated with various institutions to provide training programs for teachers in migrant schools and social services to migrant children’s families.

## **Negotiation between Home Government and Destination Government**

Migration involves movement and migrants usually transcend governing boundaries. Chinese rural to urban migrants are usually subject to governance by both source and destination

local governments (Li, 2005). Both governments have the power to manage migrants and both can find excuses to avoid taking responsibilities for migrants (Qing, 2005). In this study, the relationships and interactions between the home governments<sup>12</sup> of migrant children and the Beijing municipal government and district governments are used as examples of inter-governmental negotiations.

Most migrants come from underdeveloped regions in interior China, where governments have adopted an ‘exporting labor’ development strategy for many years. Migrants have become major contributors to the economic and social development of their native place (Qiang, 2005).

Migrants’ home governments and cadres are well aware of the importance of their migrants’ contributions towards local revenues, local market prosperity, the improvement of residents’ income, and even the economical and political of officials themselves. Protecting and serving their migrants living in destination places can help home governments maintain the gains from a labor exporting development strategy. It can also bring government officials many other benefits, such as the chance to travel around China<sup>13</sup> and to accumulate political credits.

For migrants, the protection by their home government can improve their welfare to some extent. Because children’s welfare is linked directly to the well-being of their parents, migrant children will also benefit from the services or protection offered by their home governments.

Migrant children’s home governments have greater power in negotiations with other forces on migrant welfare issues. In some instances, home governments play the role of a unifying

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<sup>12</sup> “Home government” refers to the provincial, municipal, or county government which is in charge of the migrants’ home villages. In the central and western provinces, local governments are active in exporting labor to eastern industrial regions protecting labor under their jurisdiction (Li, 2005).

<sup>13</sup> The travel costs are usually paid for by public finance, and personal costs can also be covered by public funds.

organization for individual migrants. Home governments can help migrants claim overdue wages, and protect them in various legal disputes.

The effort of trade union of XY<sup>14</sup> is a typical example of help given to their migrant children. Labor exporting is one of the primary industries for XY's economy. Beijing is the most popular destinations for migrants from XY municipality. The situation faced by migrants from XY in Beijing is viewed as a crucial issue for XY. The government of XY has done much to protect and serve its migrant workers all over the country, especially in those places with concentrated populations of XY migrants. The primary efforts from the XY government are as noted below.

First, local political leaders encourage government cadres to implement pro-migration policies and actions. On many occasions, major municipal and provincial leaders have given political presentations on the importance of migrants for local development. The obligation of local governments and cadres to provide sound services to their migrants has been frequently emphasized. Some political representatives even travel all over the country to visit their migrants.

Second, local governments help to set up trade unions for their migrants according to their administration units, normally in terms of county and township. These unions set up correspondent offices in places where XY migrants are concentrated. The local governments also fill these offices with regular and promising cadres<sup>15</sup>. Since 2002, XY has set up 2,795 village level trade unions within its jurisdiction, and 84 migrants' service centers in high-concentration areas all over the country. All migrants from XY are members of the trade unions created for them by the XY local government. Migrants can access any service center whenever they need help

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<sup>14</sup> XY is a municipal city in Henan. It is more than 1000 miles from Beijing.

<sup>15</sup> Cadres in these positions are easily promoted with the increasing functional and political importance of these positions.

outside the XY district. In the past two years, these service centers have reportedly claimed 48.7 million RMB worth of salaries due to their migrant workers, and have arranged for 15,458 migrant children to attend schools.

Third, the provincial government of Henan and municipal government of XY have been active in negotiations with governments or departments in other provinces where many migrants work. Henan province has signed memos with many provincial governments, regarding legal services for migrant workers. This action has paved the ways for them to protect their migrants' rights in these regions.

Fourth, the local government has tried to set up migrant schools for their migrant children in destination places, and at the same time provided subsidies to simple migrant schools established by their migrants.

The responses from the destination (Beijing) government are not clearly cooperative or oppositional. The attitude of destination government changes over time with respect to specific issues. In some cases, destination government sees the XY government's action as an infringement of their power (Xie, 2000). They may claim the right to supervise and manage other government's organizations.

The efforts of Mr. Wang, a cadre from the trade union department of XY, illustrate the oppositional attitudes of one destination government. Representing the XY government and the Trade Union of XY in particular, Mr. Wang tried to set up a trade union for migrant schools managed by migrants from XY. It was estimated that more than half of the 300 migrant schools in Beijing were set up and managed by XY migrants. The union would facilitate cooperation among migrant schools and help to protect the rights of the individuals involved. At the same time he

confessed that the successful establishment of this union would be a great political accomplishment for him.

However, he found himself bumping up against numerous obstacles from the Beijing government. He was officially told that he must inform the local general union in Beijing about his plan to set up a trade union for migrant schools and he cannot act before he receives the consent from Beijing government. He had to find a governmental organization as the supervisor for his trade union of migrant schools. After doing so, he received a reply from the general trade union of Beijing that “schools are educational institutions and he had to request that the local education department be the supervisor for his union”. The education department of Beijing told him that most of these migrant schools were not officially registered and they were in fact illegal organizations. As a result, they refused to be the supervisor of his trade union. Moreover, cadres from the educational department told him that even if the schools were officially registered, they would have to join the pre-existing education department trade union instead of establishing their own.

In the end, Mr. Wang’s effort to receive consent from the destination government seemed futile. However, he succeeded in strengthening relationships with other organizations. His association was recognized by the XY trade union, which encouraged cooperation and interaction among migrant schools in Beijing. Although he risked causing future disputes between the home and destination governments, Mr. Wang’s efforts provided a platform for migrant children to receive protection and support from their home government.

In some other cases, the destination government was encouraged or motivated by the efforts of migrants’ home governments. For example, JY migrant children’s school, set up by a

migrant from XY, was visited by the governor of Henan province during his stay in Beijing while attending the annual National People's Congress. The governor expressed great concern for the education of migrant children and brought stationery to donate to the school and its pupils. Shortly after the governor's visit, the mayor of Beijing participated in commencement at the same school. In the ceremony he promised that the Beijing government would try its best to ensure migrant children's equal rights to education. Thereafter, the Beijing educational committee transferred 30 million RMB to improve migrant schools in Beijing, and at the same time many migrant schools were registered and regulated. As a result, some substandard schools were demolished and some exemplary ones were subsidized. In this regard, migrants' home governments played an important role as motivators and catalysts in changing the Beijing government's longstanding inattentiveness toward issues faced by migrant children. In this case, intervention by a home government contributed to the improvement of migrants' general welfare and the life chances of migrant children.

### **The Association of Migrant Children Schools (thereafter “AMCS”)**

AMCS was an unregistered organization consisting of more than 100 migrant children schools in Beijing. It was initiated in the late 1990s by several owners of big migrant schools. At that time, they bonded together to increase cooperation among more than 200 migrant schools in order to improve their collective ability to withstand challenges, such as harassment from hostile local people, disputes with landowners, and regulators from the government. When talking about the purpose of this association, the chairman of the preparation committee said,

“There is a saying in China that unity is strength. Operating these schools in Beijing, as individual schools, we felt that our influences and forces were small,

and almost anyone could bully us, and we are also sometimes short of some critical resources, such as teachers and cash flow. Moreover, most of our schools were in relatively closed fringe areas, which are unobvious and therefore safe, so we desperately needed to communicate with each other and exchange information. Actually, most of the headmasters came from the same place and we had already known each other and interacted even before these schools.” (Informant #25, May, 2006)

Considering the difficulties faced by migrant schools, an organization like AMCS should be a necessary and valuable resource, but AMCS was never officially sanctioned by the destination government. The government maintained the stance that “these migrant schools are also illegal.” Despite their vague status, the association operated well and actually facilitated interaction and cooperation among migrant children’s schools. AMCS helped many migrant children’s schools survive in the regulating raid on such schools by the destination government. Members of AMCS unified their forces in bargaining and negotiating with the officials from educational department.

In July 2006, the educational department of destination government decided to regulate existing migrant schools because most of these schools are deemed problematic in security and teaching quality. Poor conditions in migrant schools can lead to public security problems for students, and in turn present career risks for cadres in charge of school security (Moody, 1994). The regulating raid was well organized. The government’s intention was to support some good migrant schools and demolish poorly equipped ones.

In order to reduce the obstacles of this regulation raid, the government promised to pay for the improvement of certain good migrant schools and the reallocation of students from demolished schools. However, after the evaluation of existing migrant schools, only 3 of more than 200 migrant schools were selected as candidates to support, and others should be demolished.

As soon as they were informed about the regulation raid on migrant children schools,

organizers of AMCS rapidly mobilized at least 50 schools to appeal collectively to the government. Speaking on the behalf of migrant children's educational rights, they asked for more flexible and realistic government action when dealing with migrant children's schools. They pointed out the difficulty faced in trying to satisfy government mandated requirements in a short period of time. They also cast doubts on the ability of existing schools to receive all the displaced students from schools slated for closure. The government viewed this behavior as a defiance of its authority; it did not respond to the AMCS' appeal, nor recognize the legal position of the migrant schools or the association. In addition, the government viewed AMCS' campaign as an opportunity to defeat the non-state association once and for all.

Promising to find new schools for all affected students, the government swiftly closed unqualified migrant schools and shut down several relatively well-equipped ones, the owners of which were the primary organizers of AMCS and its appeal action. Referring to this campaign, the owner of a closed migrant school noted:

“It is very unfair and unreasonable for the government to set the requirements at so high a level that no migrant schools can meet it. It is too high to be a realistic standard of which schools should be closed. I just represented all the migrant schools to the government, but the response was to close my school. My school is almost the biggest and best one of all.” (Informant #33, Nov, 2006)

Ostensibly, it seems that the government succeeded in regulating migrant schools but several unintended consequences tell another version of the story. After closing unqualified migrant schools, the government was faced with a challenge of how to find rooms for the displaced students in public schools and well-equipped migrant schools. Because most of the closed migrant schools were in suburban areas of Beijing, where few public schools exist, the government could not find enough immediate vacancies for all the displaced students.

Some public schools were also hesitant to enroll these students, fearing that receiving



migrant children would negatively affect their perceived teaching quality. The teaching quality determines to a large extent the evaluations and the corresponding benefits the school can received from the education department.

Local parents were also worried that the arrival of migrant children in public schools would affect their children's studies, so some of them transferred their children out of schools that accepted migrant children in order to put pressure on those institutions.

At the same time, hearing that the government had promised to provide education to migrant children in public schools, many migrant families had their children move from their hometown to Beijing in order to take advantage of the new opportunity. Some migrant children's home governments also complained to the Beijing government about their hasty closure of so many migrant children schools.

Facing this situation, the Beijing government countered with several different actions.

First, public schools were required to enroll qualified migrant children to fill their vacancies. Many migrant children used this chance to enter public schools, which had previously seemed far beyond their reach.

Second, in order to make sure no students dropped out of school, several well-equipped schools that had been ordered to close were allowed to continue operating until the government could find adequate room for their students.

Third, the government invested heavily in registered migrant children schools. These schools saw their facilities, staff quality, and capacity greatly improved.

Fourth, the government promised to allocate more of the budget to the construction of state-run schools for migrant children.

## **Conclusion**

Educating migrant children and providing other necessary welfare to them are the original responsibility the government should take. Although rapid social transformation makes it a complex issue of providing equal citizenship to migrant children, the issue of educating migrant children is gradually entering into the calendars of the Central Government, the home government, and the destination government.

Central Government's involvement in the issue of educating migrant children sets a good model for other levels of government to follow. The symbolic and ritual meanings of Premier Wen's attention to migrant children are well understood by the home government, destination government, and other governmental forces like Chinese Youth Development Foundation, and migrant children also realistically benefit from their efforts.

Home government is an important and effective force in promoting migrant children's welfare. It can provide a platform to organize various supporting resources to help migrant children, and it can also negotiate with destination government on behalf of migrant children.

Destination governments are transforming their attitude and role in educating migrant children under various pressures, such as the Central Government's policies and expectations, home government's requests, and the appeals from migrant schools. The positive change of destination governments' attitude and role is very important since it is the final executant to resolve the issue of educating migrant children.

## **Chapter Four: Market Forces and Educational Opportunities**

### **Introduction**

China's current reform is a marketization process by which the market gradually takes over the dominant role in distributing social resources from redistributive power (Nee, 1989; 1996). In other words, it is a process by which the government retreats in various social and economic areas. As China has been employing a gradual strategy in transforming itself to a socialist market economy, the retreat of the state takes place from periphery to core areas, for example, from rural to urban, from small state-owned enterprises to big ones, and from common trades to critical trades (Bian, 2000; 2002). It can be said that the more peripheral an area, the more marketized it is in transitional China.

The state's retreat in social and economic areas does not only mean that the state no longer directly regulates economic issues but it also implies that the state no longer takes responsibility in non-institutional areas (Solinger, 1999c). Those areas outside the direct control of the state are called non-institutional areas. The issue of migrants as well as migrant children in current China is one such area, in which the government has retreated from providing jobs or social services, leaving these tasks to the market. As a result, migrant's livelihoods and life chances are determined primarily by their market positions in a booming Chinese economy.

A person's position in the market is dependent on the person's human capital, which is evaluated with respect to education and skills, occupation, and income (Nee, 1989). The higher the market position a person has, the more resources he or she can get. Migrants are usually in relatively low market positions due to institutional barriers, their relatively low education levels,

and their limited social capital. This can explain, to some extent, why they are deemed a marginal population in the public perception and why their children suffer from low living conditions. However, migrants are actually heterogeneous in terms of their market position, especially in terms of their financial capability. The effects of migrants' varying market capability on migrant children's life chances are subtly demonstrated in the differentiated choices migrant children make when choosing where to continue with their secondary studies.

Furthermore, in terms of migrant children's lives, the retreat of the state is manifested in a reluctance to take on the responsibility of educating migrant children in the same way as local children (Bonian, 2002).

## **The Emergence and Operation of Migrant Schools**

The emergence of migrant schools is a response to the increasing educational demand from migrant children, many of whom cannot enroll in public schools in cities (Shukai, 2000). For example, XZ migrant school, one of the earliest migrant schools in Beijing, was set up by a migrant to educate her relatives' children. When talking about the reason for founding XZ migrant children school, Headmaster Li related this:

“I was selling vegetables with many relatives in Beijing before I set up this school. At that time many relatives faced a common problem, which was that all of their children could not enter schools for education once they reached schooling age. All of us were very worried about this. Without education these children would not be able to find good jobs in the future. As I was a teacher in my village school before I came to Beijing, I was persuaded by my relatives to teach their children. They would pay me to teach. I accepted the suggestion, and we managed to construct a very simple house in the vegetable fields and I began to teach nine children from my relatives' families. Some time later, more and more parents heard this news and started to send their children to my classroom, for their children were also unable to enroll in public schools. Later, the number of students grew to the extent that my husband resigned from his work and came

to Beijing to help me set up a primary school exclusively for migrant children. At the beginning, the school developed very fast due to the large number of migrant children who were not attending school at that time.” (Informant #25, May, 2006)

XZ School was just one example of more than 300 migrant schools set up by individuals within the past decade. Most of these schools are private, which means that all the costs are covered by the owners and that their revenues come from the fees paid by their students. The more students they can recruit, the more fees they can collect for running their schools. As the economic capacity of migrant families is generally weak, the fees are relatively inexpensive, mostly ranging from 300 to 600 RMB per semester for one child. By one estimate, a private migrant school has to enroll at least 500 students in order to keep the business sustainable. There is almost no criterion for enrolment, and migrant schools advertise themselves to migrant children in order to attract more students, their source of income. The growing number of migrant schools has caused increased competition between schools, and each one tries its best to attract more migrant children. For many owners, earning more money is the main objective of this process.

Various strategies have been employed by migrant schools to attract students. First, in order to control the operation costs, migrant schools usually keep their teachers' working hours prolonged and offer them a minimal salary, around 600 RMB per month, which is barely enough to maintain a poor standard of living in Beijing. Migrant schools are usually located in suburban areas where the cost of rent is relatively low, and the facilities in these schools are almost always old and in poor condition. Students are crowded into classrooms and do not have access to any facilities that might require expensive equipment or high supervision.

Second, in order to improve the marketability of their schools, owners try their best to advertise their schools within migrant communities and neighborhood markets. Owners also try to

cultivate positive relationships with journalists, who can advertise their school through various forms of media, a process that frequently brings broader recognition and more resources to a school.

Third, since most migrant schools are not officially registered, they keep their operations clandestine. For example, security is of the utmost importance to these schools and they tend to adopt a compliant attitude when interacting with officials in order to avoid trouble or unwanted government attention. They also value and exploit every opportunity they have to cultivate positive relationships with local authorities.

Fourth, in order to meet the actual needs of their customers, migrant schools' teaching follows the national curriculum instead of the Beijing curriculum. This reflects the fact that most migrant children will return to their hometowns to pursue higher education. Following the national system can make it easier for these children to catch up with peer students in their hometown schools, where teaching content is organized according to the national curriculum. Moreover, most migrant schools use a highly flexible timetable and provide free commuting bus services to migrant children in consideration of their parents' working schedules.

Migrant children are the ultimate beneficiaries of the competition among migrant schools because market competition really motivates the schools to improve their educational services or be eliminated from the market.

### **Differentiated Choices in Schooling**

Migrant children, like their parents, are not necessarily homogeneous in terms of their living conditions and ability to access life opportunities. Rather, there are large differences among the students in terms of their parents' economic, social and cultural capitals and their own

academic performance. This is typically demonstrated in the kinds of schools they attend. Migrant children's schools represent a wide range of teaching quality and therefore a corresponding range of implications for migrant children's future educational achievements.

Basically, there are five types of schools which migrant children could choose from, each one offering a different quality of education. The distribution of my 22 subjects among the five categories of schools is shown in table 3.

**Table 3: The Distribution of School Choice of Migrant Children under Study**

School types	Key public school	Ordinary public school	Migrant school	Hometown public school	Private boarding school	Total
Number	1	5	7	6	3	22

**Source:** Field work notes.

### ***Key Public School***

Key public schools in Beijing enjoy the best reputation and overall quality, making them the best possible choice for migrant children. However, only a few students (one of the twenty-two students in the study) can gain entry into these schools because of the high entrance thresholds, such as competitive entrance examinations and fees that are higher than most migrants' income allows for.

Key public schools are the most prestigious form of urban education. Only a small portion of local children can enter these schools after fierce competition. Students living outside the boundaries of a public school's corresponding district must pay high fees, making it even harder for migrant children to enter these schools. Most migrant children do not even dream of key public schools as a realistic option.

YLW entered a famous secondary public school after he finished primary education in a migrant school with the assistance of his father's money and *guanxi*. YLW's father is a wealthy contractor and has a strong *guanxi* with the headmaster of his school. YLW's enrolment in a key public school set him up, to some extent, for a promising future. For the majority of YLW's migrant peers, it is rather difficult to obtain valuable life chances, such as entering a famous public school in the city. Therefore they have to resort to other, more realistic choices based on individual considerations and the resources available to them.

### ***Ordinary Public School<sup>16</sup>***

The requirements for entering ordinary public schools are not as high as they are for entering key schools. Yet not all migrant children can enroll in such schools. The first condition is whether these public schools have any vacancies available. Only after enrolling all the local children within their district do these public schools consider the applications of migrant children, who as noted earlier are not their responsibility according to national education law.

Given that there are vacancies for migrant children in these public schools, migrant children's parents have to provide various certificates<sup>17</sup> before their child can be enrolled. Some schools also require special one-time sponsorship or entry fees<sup>18</sup>. Actually, very few migrants can

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<sup>16</sup> Ordinary schools are not as famous as key public schools, but they are still public schools and their teaching quality is as good as a key public school's.

<sup>17</sup> The certificates migrants have to show include the following: a temporary dwelling certificate, a family planning certificate, an employment certificate, a marriage certificate, and a transferring certificate.

<sup>18</sup> Sponsor fee is money that students' parents must pay in order to enroll their children in the school. The amount of endowment fee depends on the quality of the school that the child want to enroll in. For a key public school, the fee can be as high as 30,000 RMB, which is far beyond normal migrants' affordability. For a normal public school, the fee usually ranges from 3,000 to 10,000 RMB.



provide all the certificates legally required to enter one of these schools because obtaining the necessary documents usually costs them more time and money than they can afford. Due to these constraints, parents' economic capability plays a critical role. Usually the only migrant children who can afford to study in these schools are those whose parents run their own businesses.

However, not all public schools set such high thresholds for migrant children. Public schools with a relatively high number of vacancies can enroll migrant children without charging extra fees or requiring multiple certificates. These schools usually have better quality facilities and teachers than migrant schools, but the fees are lower, so they seem a better option for migrant children.

Zhiqing Secondary School is a typical example. It currently enrolls many migrant children. Zhiqing School is not as famous as key public schools in Beijing; hence it is deemed to be not an ideal choice of local children. In recent years, with the demographic transition<sup>19</sup> in Beijing, the traditional student source<sup>20</sup> of Zhiqing Secondary School is becoming smaller and smaller. Therefore, the vacancies are increasing to the extent that the school risked being closed. If the school were to close, the teachers would be dismissed and the headmasters and other administrators will lose their positions. The headmaster observed:

“Saving this school is saving our jobs and our interests. If our student enrolment continues to decrease, the government will definitely close this school and transfer the rest of the students elsewhere. So if we can enroll more students, we will survive. We found that there were many migrant children living around our school and that they could not go to public schools for their lack of urban household registration and money. They were

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19 It is characterized by the sharp decrease of birth rates and the number of school aged children (Luo and Yao, 2002). In general, the bigger the city is, the faster is the decrease in birth rate. There are two reasons contributing to the demographic transition in big cities in China. The first is strict implementation of the one child policy in urban China for the past three decades, and the second is the dramatically increased living cost in big cities of China.

20 The traditional student source is local children, who have Beijing household registration.

our potential students. After studying the policies and attitudes of the government's education department, we started to enroll migrant children in the same way as local residents. They have to pay low fees which are much less than migrant schools, where facilities and teaching quality are worse than ours. So, now we can enroll enough students, and the government cannot close down our school.” (Informant #29, Nov, 2006)

The enrollment of migrant children in Zhiqiang School has drastically changed the composition of the student body. The majority of students are now migrant children; on average a class of 40 students will contain only 2 or 3 local students. One cause for this may be that the local students' parents fear a further decline of teaching quality after the arrival of migrant children, so they transfer their children to better public schools. However, although teaching quality in this school is relatively low compared to other public schools (as measured by various competitions among public schools), this school still provides a valuable opportunity for migrant children to enjoy better education at an affordable price.

The facilities in Zhiqiang School meet citywide standards for Beijing public schools, which are typically much higher than migrant schools. The teachers are also from normal universities and some of them have even gotten their graduate degrees from overseas universities. The cost of attending Zhiqiang School is partially covered by public funds. The responses of Zhiqiang secondary school to demographic transitions in urban China have contributed to the improvement of migrant children's educational situation.

Despite the benefits, many migrant children do not enter this kind of public school to continue their secondary education. One reason is that relatively few parents are aware of these schools or accurately informed. They assume that it is difficult to enroll their children in any public school. Migrants work long hours every day and their sources of information are usually friends, relatives, and neighbors, who are also limited in their access to current information.

Another reason parents do not enroll their children in ordinary public schools is that they doubt the quality of a school that would accept students so easily. A student's father once told me:

"I know that a public school can accept migrant children without charging extra fees in my neighborhood, but I will not send my child to this school for it was said that the school's discipline is very bad and the worst local children are there. They are fighting and playing everyday instead of studying, so my child would learn to be bad in that school. My child will stay in migrant school for his secondary education, and if he studies well in the future I will send him back to my hometown, where he can take the national college examination." (Informant #2, Nov, 2006)

When asked how he knew about this school's situation, the father said, "All my neighbors know it, and my child's teachers [in a migrant school] also said it." Most migrant parents have a similar attitude due to their information sources.

However, ZJ's experience tells a different story about this kind of school. His family is so poor that his parents could not afford to send him to a relatively cheap migrant school, let alone a public school in Beijing. Returning to his hometown was also impractical for there was no relative to look after him. In the end, he was sent to a public school by his parents because his family's difficult financial situation qualifies him to study there for free.

After half a year of study in this school, ZJ told me that his school is much better than the former migrant school he attended and that his teachers and classmates are very friendly. He felt happy in his new school and his studies improved greatly. Although he has entered a public school for now, he is likely to face difficulty in the future, considering that it is even harder for migrant children to gain high school and college entrance, unless they can return to their hometown to take the college entrance examination.

### ***Migrant School***

The migrant school is a popular choice for many migrant families. There are generally two types of migrant children choosing migrant schools for their secondary study. One type is represented by students such as HF. A top student throughout her primary education, she is the most promising student in her migrant school. HF's parents have been working in the decorating business in Beijing for several years. Their economic capability is relatively high. They have high expectations for their only child. As HF's mother said,

“We have only one child and we have been investing all our hopes and resources in her. Now we are working hard to earn money, and the purpose is to raise enough money for her future education. We expect that she will at least get a university degree and then she may have a good job.” (Informant #13, June, 2006)

For a Chinese student to attend university, it is necessary for him or her to succeed in the national college examination. Educational regulations make it impossible for children to take this examination in places other than their hometowns. So for a migrant child like HF, the best way to prepare for this examination is to receive a high school education in a place where she can take the national college examination. HF's parents are aware of this system. In explaining why they did not send their child to a school in their hometown, her father had this to say:

“HF is too young to be sent back to our hometown right now, although we plan to do so in one year. In the first year of secondary study, as a star student, she will continue receiving close attention from her teachers and we will also carefully supervise her. One year later, we will send her to a good school in our hometown and her aunts will look after and supervise her, or her mother will return to hometown to look after her. Anyway, she must go to a good school in her hometown within a year, or it will be hard for her to catch up with others, for the teaching quality in our hometown is much better than in Beijing.” (Informant #13, June, 2006)

Moreover, the content taught in migrant schools parallels the national curriculum instead of that of Beijing. This makes it easy for migrant children to adapt to studies once they return to

their hometown. This is one important reason why many students choose migrant schools, especially those like HF, who will definitely return to her hometown to prepare for future education.

The second type of student attending migrant schools is the child whose parents feel that the education of their children is not a worthwhile investment. For them, the migrant school is a rational option because the fees are affordable. ZY represents a migrant child whose parents gave up hope on their child's educational future. ZY's parents received very little formal education. His father is a driver and his mother stays at home without a job. ZY not only performed badly in his studies, but he also liked fighting with others both in and out of his school. He was a trouble-maker in the eyes of his teachers. On the eve of his graduation from primary study, his father told me this:

“I will send him to the secondary department of the same migrant school, although it is useless for him to go to school any more. He is too young to work at present, and the school can help look after and supervise him. There is no suitable relative in our hometown to supervise him, so I cannot send him back. Even if there were, who can manage to supervise him? What he can do is make trouble, and it will be better for him to remain under our supervision. After 3 years of secondary school, I plan to find a job for him or send him to a technical school to learn some skills in order to earn a living.” (Informant #8, June, 2006)

### ***Hometown Public School***

Hometown public schools are chosen by some parents who still have high expectations for their children in terms of educational achievements. In these cases, the better the child's grades are, the higher the parents' expectations, and the earlier the parents are willing to send their child back to their hometown public school. ZZY, for example, was sent to his hometown for secondary schooling soon after his graduation from primary school because his father could not find a public

school in Beijing for him. His parents had been doing business in Beijing for many years. ZZY is their only child. They have very high expectations of him.

ZZY's parents understand the system that dictates that a migrant child can only take the national college examination in their hometown. They want to send ZZY back as early as possible to improve ZZY's chance of entering the university in the long run. They conceded that this will cause them to be separated from their child for many years, but they put the biggest priority on their child's future academic development. As for the risk of having no parental supervision, they said,

“Now his grandparents are still healthy and they can supervise him, or his mother will return to look after him. Education is about his life-long happiness, and it deserves our sacrifices.” (Informant #11, June, 2006)

SW's parents have taken more radical actions in ensuring the quality of their children's schooling. Both SW and her sister are top students in their classes, and their parents see their education as the most important issue in their family. After SW finished her primary school as the best student in her class, her parents decided to move from Beijing to Wuhan, where the policies concerning migrant children are more open than in Beijing, allowing their children to enter a good public school there. More importantly, the curriculum taught in schools in Wuhan is the same curriculum as that in their hometown in Sichuan. When discussing their strategies, her parents told me this:

“We are working in the clothes business, which can be done in many places. So we still can do our business there and we have even worked there before. Wuhan's educational quality is advanced compared to the rest of the nation and I can manage to send my children to good public schools there so that they can receive good schooling. When they are old enough to take the national college examination, I will take them to my hometown. The competition for the national college examination in Sichuan is much smaller than that in Wuhan, so they will be in more advantaged positions in the competition.” (Informant #22, June, 2006)

### ***Private Boarding School***

Private boarding schools are similar to migrant schools in that both are profit-oriented, and their students are seen as customers. Private boarding schools are usually better than migrant schools in terms of their facilities and teaching quality. The fees charged by boarding schools are much more expensive than that of migrant schools, so migrant children who enter this kind of school must have relatively wealthy parents. Moreover, boarding schools are characterized by the strict control and tight management of students, whose everyday lives are closely monitored by their teachers.

Normally, two kinds of migrant children are sent to private boarding schools. First are children whose parents want them to receive schooling in their hometown to prepare for the college examination, but cannot find suitable relatives to act as their supervisors. Second are children who have behavioral problems in primary schools and whose parents want to take advantage of a boarding school's strict management to discipline their children. In both of these cases, parents are hoping to buy a future for their child.

LX is in many ways a typical child enrolled in a private boarding school. LX is the only child in his family. His parents are both doing small business. His mother runs a barber shop, while his father manages a construction team. Their economic capacity is relatively high. LX was an infamous trouble-maker, both in and out of his first school, a migrant school. His academic performance was poor. Bullying classmates in school and robbing small children was routine behavior for him. His parents were very disappointed with his performance in primary school, and they feared that he would become a criminal as he grew up. Moreover, he is their only son, and therefore is their only hope for future support. So they decided to send him to a private boarding

school in their hometown in the hope that their son would be transformed into a good student. Half a year later, his parents observed a transformation in their child:

“LX has changed a lot and seems tamer than before. At the beginning he did not care about his supervisors and did as he wished. But after being punished by his teachers and disciplinarians, he began to behave orderly and nicely. And his study also improved a lot. It is worth our money. We cannot imagine what he would be like if we had not sent him to that school.” (Informant #9, June, 2006)

## **Corporate Philanthropy**

A corporation is, by definition, profit-oriented. In other words, making profits is the single purpose for its existence, and all the operations related to the enterprise are designed to serve this ultimate goal. Following this logic, corporate philanthropic behavior is often utilized for the improvement of a corporation's image with the ultimate aim of making profits. An enterprise's charitable activity is an effective form of cause-related marketing (Tang & Xu, 2004), which contributes to the improvement of the company's reputation in the public's eye.

In China, corporate philanthropic activities related to migrant children's issues operate in two primary ways.

First, enterprises give endowments to influential middle actors, mostly government organizations, media, or famous NGOs (for example, World Vision), which are responsible for distributing the endowments to children in migrant schools. Among all enterprise-sponsored charitable activities in migrant schools from 2004 to 2006, six out of nine activities operated in this way. This avenue makes it easy for enterprises to achieve their cause-related marketing goal by cooperating with influential and widely-known organizations or social programs. Examples are Hope Project, The Same Song, and New Beijing Daily, which help corporations to broadcast or report their philanthropic actions. Another benefit for these enterprises is the positive relationship



with the government that is built through their activities.

The second form of corporate philanthropic activity is direct donations to migrant schools or migrant children's families. This kind of activity usually includes a grand ceremony and is reported in various media outlets. In order to distribute the money directly to students, corporations need to figure out how to access their recipients. Most of these channels are less effective than government or NGO actors in reaching migrant children. Therefore, only 3 out of 9 cases of corporate philanthropic activity fell into this category.

The effects of charitable activities are manifested in three different aspects of migrant children's lives.

First, migrant children get enterprise-sponsored scholarships or subsidies through their schools, based on their academic performance or their families' economic situations.

Second, migrant schools are supported by endowments from enterprises so that they can provide better education for migrant children.

Third, various programs geared toward helping migrant children are sponsored by enterprise endowments. For example, one famous oil company supported a social work program for migrant children in their schools and communities.

## **Conclusion**

The emergence of migrant schools is a response to the state's withdrawal from various non-institutional fields, especially in the lives of migrants and their children. Without local household registration, migrant children are prevented from enjoying education in urban public schools alongside local children. Thus migrant children's unmet demand for schooling creates a

special niche for private migrant schools, which are mostly customized to meet migrant children's special needs. Whatever primary motivations their owners might have, migrant schools have been improving migrant children's opportunities and the quality of education available to them, which are crucial factors for a child during his or her schooling years.

Marketization creates classifications of participants based on their differentiated market capabilities. The diverse educational paths chosen by different migrant children and their families constitute one manifestation of their marketization classification. Different schools also offer different life chances for migrant children. Such a classification system is formed following the market logic that parents' economic capabilities will determine the types of schools that migrant children can attend. Therefore, it can be argued that while marketization helps to decrease the effects of institutional or administrative constraints on migrant children as a whole, it also contributes to stratification within the group of migrant children.

Corporate philanthropic actions demonstrate that marketization helps to introduce new forces into areas that were previously dominated by administrative and redistributive powers. Market mechanisms are more flexible, open, and equal than administrative logic. Moreover, the issue of migrant children in transitional China is never an isolated area; it is actually a subject that impacts the considerations and actions of various social actors.

## **Chapter Five: Support from Civil Society**

### **Introduction**

Civil society is composed of the totality of voluntary civic and social organizations and institutions that form the basis of a functioning society, as opposed to the forces-backed structure of state institutions and commercial institutions (Edwards, 2004). Civil society also refers to the arena of uncoerced collective action around shared interests, purposes and values. Civil society, with its distinctive working mechanisms, differs from the government or market and is thus called the third sector of a society. Uncoerced, voluntary and non-profit social actions form the most important operating logic in this sector. Justice and equality form the most popular goals of the organizations in civil society, and charitable organizations are the typical actors, as their targets are usually marginalized people. Overall, civil society plays a crucial role in promoting social justice and in helping those in need.

For historical reasons, civil society in China has not yet been fully developed. However, this sector saw booming development in the post-reform years. It is a new social phenomenon for China (Ma, 2005). Before reform, almost every aspect of life in China – social, economic, and political – was under the control of the state. The government was run by an authoritarian party, the economy was operating according to the central planning instead of the market, and society was politicized. There was no space for the existence of a civil society independent of the state.

Since 1978, reform policy has been gradually transforming Chinese society from one that is monolithic into one with multiple facets. Along with these shifts, state power has been retreating from various economic and social areas, and market and civic forces have been taking up the roles

that used to be played by the state (Bergere, 1997). With the deepening marketization, the market economy in China has been booming in recent years. The market has already played a dominant role in distributing social resources in many economic sectors, except those filled by crucial state monopolies, which are nonetheless also on their way towards marketization (Bian, 2002).

In the social arena, the state has relaxed its tight control on the development of non-state organizations and their activities, giving them autonomy as long as they do not threaten the dominance of the state (Ma, 1994). The state's retreat has been creating a growing gap, which can be filled by the burgeoning development of a civil society in transitional China (Ma, 2005).

The major actors in Chinese civil society today are international and grassroots NGOs, which are active in promoting the welfare of vulnerable and marginalized social groups. Their efforts and social impacts are manifested in their involvement in the lives of migrant children.

Social transformation in post-reform China has not only been promoting the development of civil society but has also been re-structuring social and economic life. Some of these structural transformations bring various unintended benefits for the migrant children whose living conditions can be improved as the result of opportunities created by civil society. The following section helps illustrate this phenomenon.

### **Efforts from International NGOs**

World Vision (hereafter "WV") is a Christian relief and development organization working for the well-being of people, especially children. Through emergency relief, education, health care, economic development and promotion of justice, WV helps communities as well as the people within them. It is an influential international NGO with staff members work in more

than 100 countries and regions. WV came to China in 1989. In recent years, it has invested more than US \$104.47 million in its programs in China, which benefit millions of poor and disadvantaged people.

The Chinese government views overseas NGOs as the counterparts to overseas enterprises in terms of developing China's poor areas, helping disadvantaged people, and resolving various social problems. The Chinese government needs the funds and the expertise of international NGOs to help bridge the unequal access to services caused by the retreat of the state in various areas. These INGOs<sup>21</sup> also need the assistance of the Chinese state to operate their projects in China (Ma, 2005). As a result, with the exception of several religiously and politically sensitive organizations, the INGOs and the Chinese government share positive, inter-dependent relationships.

However, it is evident that the Chinese state's treatment of INGOs is much better than their treatment of Chinese NGOs. In addition, by cooperating with INGOs on their Chinese projects, the Chinese government is also in a position to easily supervise their actions and ensure that they pose no threat to the government's dominance or harm to national interests (Zengke, 1994).

Under such a win-win cooperative relationship, WV has obtained comprehensive support from the Chinese government on multiple levels. For example, high level cadres in the Central Government met with the president of WV, sending the message to lower level cadres to adopt positive attitudes toward this organization. Some ministries of the Chinese government also included WV in their development programs. For example, in 2006 the Foreign Capital Project

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<sup>21</sup> International non-government organization

Management Center of the State Council Leading Group Office of Poverty Alleviation and Development invited WV to participate in a community development pilot program in the Wengniute Banner of Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. WV received assistance from local governments in their execution of this project.

Another example illustrating the inter-dependency of involved stake-holders, and for which WV received comprehensive assistance and resources, was the cooperative effort between WV, the China General Charity Association,<sup>22</sup> and many other Chinese enterprises to improve the educational situation of children in poor areas of China. A distinct characteristic of the relationship between WV (as well as other INGOs) and the Chinese government, enterprises or official NGOs, is that they are equal players in operation. INGOs enjoy a position of privilege that the Chinese grassroots NGOs simply cannot reach.

WV has also been actively helping migrant children in countless ways, both direct and indirect. The clearest form of support has been their donation of money to poor migrant children, either directly or through the conduit of schools. For example, in the past five years, WV has provided constant financial subsidies to migrant children through the provision of scholarships to migrant schools. The recipients are always students with excellent academic performance or poor family backgrounds. The importance of the scholarship is best illustrated in the words of one recipient, HF, a girl who was very successful in her studies:

“I can receive a 300 RMB scholarship from WV every semester for my good grades. I feel very proud of it, and my parents will reward me by taking me to the zoo and McDonalds or buying me some nice clothes, and more importantly I feel that my efforts are recognized by teachers and the school. I believe that will also get rewards if I do my best in school.” (Informant #13, June, 2006)

It was obvious that she was greatly motivated by the rewards offered for her excellent

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<sup>22</sup> One of the biggest charitable foundations led by the Chinese Central Government

grades. Believing in her capability, she also told me that she would do her best to enter a university in the future. Another representative case is ZJ, a student with moderate academic performance, whose family is very poor. He has been receiving subsidies from WV for three years, and he told me this:

“I would have dropped out of school without the subsidies, for my parents cannot afford my study. I greatly appreciate the school and WV, who gives me money even though my grades are not good. I have to repay them, and the way I can do that is to study hard. I can find a good job if I study hard, and my parents can lead good lives.” (Informant #2, June, 2006)

ZJ has since entered a public school in Beijing and does not have to pay for his education as he comes from a poor family. He is still receiving subsidies from WV. It is quite possible that without subsidies, ZJ would be floating on the streets and collecting garbage with his mother, a disabled person.

Indirectly, WV has been trying to help migrant children by contributing and mobilizing resources to improve the conditions of their schools and their communities.

First, WV has donated large sums of money to upgrade migrant schools' facilities, which were previously in poor condition. It also promised to help several reputable migrant schools to construct classrooms if they could obtain the necessary building space.

Second, WV has mobilized scholars and universities to participate in teacher training programs for educators in migrant schools by financing the programs. For example, WV sponsored a training program for teachers in all the registered migrant schools in Beijing in 2006. Teachers had the chance to communicate with and learn from experienced teachers in public schools. Some of them also benefited greatly from the encouragement they received in the training programs. In an interview one participant told me:

“I learned a lot from the lecturers, who are experienced teachers in public

schools, professors in university, and social workers. I learned some skills about organizing classes and more importantly, their presentations motivated me and encouraged me to reflect more on my work and my future development. This is a good experience, and I was also awarded a certificate which will add to my credentials in teaching.” (Informant #23, July, 2006)

This sentiment reflects that training programs such as this one are useful for improving teachers’ capabilities and more importantly, their morale, which will in turn improve the teaching quality in migrant schools.

Third, by cooperating with scholars and universities, WV has been introducing social work and community development methods to help migrant children. Specifically, WV has been organizing and sponsoring a program whereby the social work department from one of Beijing’s top universities cooperates with selected migrant schools. Social work students can put theory into practice in the schools and apply social work methods in order to provide students with specialized services.

This is a win-win practice. Social work students get the chance to practice their skills in an actual school, and more importantly, migrant children in these schools reap the benefit of special services. Taking advantage of the cooperative spirit between scholars and other NGOs, WV has been working to set up community centers for migrant children near their homes. These centers are multifunctional; they provide a practical field where scholars can conduct ethnographic study and they are a place for migrant children to seek services and find extra-curricular activities, which are lacking in their disordered communities and crowded homes.

All in all, it is obvious that the role of WV as a sponsor and organizer is critical to the success of these programs. WV has also set up a model that other grassroots NGOs can follow to improve their operations expertise and service quality. This, in turn, will improve the services grassroots NGOs can provide to migrant children.



## **Grassroots NGOs' Initiatives**

Domestic grassroots NGOs have played an active role in promoting the well-being of migrant children and their efforts have truly been improving the situation of migrant children in many ways. As they are established, and start developing services and charitable activities, NGOs bring numerous advantages to migrant children. This process can be illustrated with the stories of two major grassroots NGOs in the following segment.

As an authoritarian institution, the Chinese government wants to keep everything, especially organizational entities, under its control (Zengke, 1994). In China, setting up grassroots NGOs is a politically sensitive issue, and the Chinese government always discourages the development of unofficial organizations in order to maintain its own dominance (Ma, 1997). This can be illustrated in the registration processes of two grassroots NGOs: Facilitator and True Love Educational Institute (TLEI hereafter), both of which are very active in issues concerning migrant children.

As grassroots NGOs dedicated to charitable pursuits, Facilitator and TLEI should be registered in the civil affairs department as non-profit social organizations. However, the government would not approve either organization's application for NGO certificates. As a result, both groups registered in the Industry and Commerce Bureau as enterprises and started paying taxes to stay operational. One reason for the registration difficulties is that the government is unhappy with these unofficial social organizations; some departments or cadres interpret their existence as defiance of the government's monopoly in public issues. The president of a grassroots NGO told me that another reason for the difficulties in registration is that no official organization wants to supervise these grassroots NGOs for fear of future troubles and political accountability.

Although discouraged by the government, most grassroots NGOs eventually register and commence operation. Apart from the financial burden of annual taxation, the enterprise certificates do not generally impede the practices and efforts of NGOs in their charitable pursuits. For these grassroots NGOs, being registered as a business gave them a specific legal title, but they continue to identify themselves as charitable NGOs, instituted to help those in disadvantaged situations.

### ***Facilitator***

Facilitator was set up as an enterprise in 2003 but has always focused on helping migrant workers in cities. Facilitator works to effectively mobilize and organize other social forces that can help migrants. Like most grassroots NGOs in China, Facilitator's financial capability is weak and it depends on contributions from individuals and enterprises in order to maintain its operations. As a result, Facilitator cannot provide direct financial support to migrants and their children in the same way that INGOs, large scale government-backed NGOs, and foundations can. Facilitator acts mostly as an advertiser and articulator for migrants' interests and issues, and as an organizer or cooperator in serving migrants.

For example, in the spring of 2003 when SARS<sup>23</sup> was spreading through Beijing, Facilitator helped protect migrants in Beijing by educating them about proper methods of self-protection, and by mobilizing enterprises and foundations to donate money and informational articles to migrants. Facilitator mobilized their volunteers to disseminate these articles throughout migrants' communities and migrant schools at a time when most people did not dare to go to public areas.

Through its ongoing involvement in efforts to help migrants, Facilitator gradually became

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<sup>23</sup> Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, a serious national epidemic which broke in the spring of 2003 all over China. Beijing was one of the most seriously affected areas.

well-known among migrant communities, and more migrants started to participate in the volunteer activities organized by Facilitator. Their participation also increased the effectiveness of activities. For example, migrant art groups often visit construction sites, factories, or migrants' communities to comfort and inform the migrant population through art shows, most of which accurately echo the realities of migrants' lives. Facilitator's advertising efforts attracted broad attention from the public, and its reputation has benefited from its activities.

Another strategy Facilitator has employed is cooperating with international NGOs and foundations that have stronger financial capabilities and management expertise. This is a critical tactic for Facilitator as well as other grassroots NGOs, especially charitable ones. As mentioned previously, INGOs and foundations generally have good relationships with the government. Being Facilitator's partners, these larger institutions can pave the way for Facilitator to implement its own programs.

Facilitator and other grassroots NGOs are better informed about local knowledge, which is critical for foreign NGOs and large foundations looking to successfully implement programs and efforts in the local Chinese context. Facilitator actively advertises itself in order to acquire funds from or build cooperation with INGOs and foundations. Its officials have also been doing their best to construct positive relations with these larger organizations and to maintain their reputation among peer NGOs. One official in Facilitator shared this with me:

“It is necessary for our peer grassroots NGOs to cooperate on many issues, but it is also important for us to compete with each other for fame and more critically, resources. To this end cooperation with rich international organizations is the most crucial and our performances have been excellent among our peers. For example, we have set up a longstanding cooperative relationship with Ford Foundation, which is very rich in resources and also very generous, and our community support program also gets generous funds from it. This is a realistic tactic for us because we are playing in a win-win game, and more importantly

migrants and their children will really benefit from our cooperation, which definitely improves our services and resources available to them.” (Informant #31, Nov, 2006)

Moreover, Facilitator mobilized critical social forces such as scholars and social leaders to participate in the charitable cause of helping migrants. Its strategy is basically to invite intellectual or social leaders to be its consultants and refer to them as expert volunteers. These consultants are highly respected by all organization members and they participate in ceremonies at annual meetings. They are very important allies for Facilitator; some of them even participate in policy-making within the government. The participation of these experts or leaders is seen as morally legitimate, since they are working toward helping marginal populations achieve social justice. Their assistance is also politically feasible since they are supporting an organization that appears to be an enterprise, even though it is championing for legal rights. The professional consultants have done a lot to realize activities, which seemed beyond the abilities of the Facilitator staff alone.

### ***True Love Institute***

Another typical example is the True Love Educational Institute, which is a newly founded grassroots NGO focusing specifically on issues concerning migrant children. It was set up by a teacher from Shanxi province two years ago. While talking about the founding of this organization, the director told me this:

“The idea came from my personal experience of being a volunteer teacher in a poor, interior village school, and my knowledge of the educational situations of migrant children in cities. I deeply felt that over-commercialization of education and the rural to urban dichotomy crudely deprived migrant children of the opportunity to enjoy quality education, which is critical for their future development and social harmony. I just felt that it was necessary to do something good for migrant children, and then after interacting with many migrant families, it seemed to me that ongoing educational provisions for migrant children in migrant schools and public schools was far from adequate, and that customized

education covering most aspects of their lives was needed. The demands of most migrant children have already changed from mere financial and material support to equal rights to a quality education, which takes their specific situations into consideration. Moreover, by doing this charitable cause, I can fulfill my dream of having a meaningful career. These are the primitive motives for the birth of True Love.” (Informant #30, Nov, 2006)

As for the strategies in developing itself, the director of True Love added:

“I was inspired by the success of Facilitator’s development, and we really learned a lot from them. For example, volunteers are very important for our grassroots NGOs because we cannot afford the expense of employing fulltime staff members to implement our projects. It is relatively easy for us to recruit volunteers because of our moral legitimacy and the large number of university students in Beijing. Yes, universities are very important, because they are not only the best places to recruit qualified volunteers, but also the sources of expertise we need to design and develop our customized courses for migrant children. These courses will distinguish True Love from its other peers, and add a credential that we can use to compete for project funds from rich INGOs and foundations.” (Informant #30, Nov, 2006)

It is evident that True Love initially had a strong sense of the competition needed to establish and develop their organization. It also played a significant role in achieving the maximum utilization of social resources for migrant children.

## **Conclusion**

Civil society, like the market, bridges the gap resulting from the withdrawal of the state from various social areas. The involvement of civil society organizations greatly improves the organizational power and social capital of Chinese society. The emergence and active involvement of civil society forces in transitional China have enhanced the lives of migrant children by mobilizing various social resources to serve them.

First, civil society has attracted financial support from various international and grassroots NGOs in the form of scholarships, which help poor students to overcome economic

hurdles and encourage academically motivated students to achieve better grades.

Second, migrant schools have received support from NGOs to improve their facilities and teacher training, which ultimately benefits migrant children by providing them with a high quality education.

Third, civil society organizes various social activities centered on migrant children, which creates opportunities for migrant children to interact with members of mainstream society and receive diverse professional services from mainstream groups, such as scholars, social workers, and other volunteers. The efforts of actors and institutions in civil society therefore help to improve the educational life chances of migrant children and to reverse the trend of migrant children's isolation from mainstream society.

## **Chapter Six: Conclusion**

### **Contribution of the Thesis**

Migrant children are usually treated as a relatively isolated social group. However, by exploring the life stories of migrant children in Beijing, this study tentatively found out that, migrant children are actually embedded in various social networks, which include not only their parents' social capital but also considerations and concerns from various social actors in their lives. These diverse social actors have actually been functioning as social facilitating forces for migrant children.

First, because migrant children are members of an underclass living in urban areas, the government (with an eye on social justice and social stability) shows concern for them. For example, high-level cadres in the central and local government repeatedly emphasize the importance of supporting migrant children by clearing obstacles to their education, providing financial assistance to migrant children from poor families, and urging the state media to broadcast issues concerning migrant children's welfare. As an authoritarian state, the Chinese government is strong and resourceful, and its involvement in helping migrant children is crucial for their welfare.

Second, following market logic, marketization in post-reform China has been transforming more and more areas into market-oriented spaces. Various market actors, motivated by the pressures of competition and profit-making, respond to market information as soon as they can. Migrant children are basically benefiting from this trend in two ways. On the one hand, the markets induces competition among migrant schools, which try to provide customized services to migrant children in order to boost enrolment, earn income, and stay operational and profitable.

Moreover, many enterprises respond to increasing market competition by undertaking philanthropic actions that promote positive relationships with the government and the general public. Marketization can help close the gap caused by the retreat of the state in the realm of education, as can be demonstrated by the booming migrant children schools.

Third, the rapid development of civil society has allowed entities from this sector to play a stronger a role in transitional China's social issues. Migrant children are popular recipients of charitable civil resources, including the resources of INGOs, grassroots NGOs, and volunteer associations and actors, as discussed in Chapter five. These forces can provide migrant children with tangible benefits, such as financial assistance. Their most significant contribution is their organizational power, with which they can mobilize various social resources to help migrant children.

### **The Implication this Study**

One theoretical implication of this study is that the class reproduction in transitional China is an indeterminate and unpredictable process involving various social actors. The experiences of underclass migrant children in this study show that their fates are not determined to be underclass in destination society, but they can be rather mobile with the assistance of facilitating forces from various differentiated sectors of the transitional Chinese society. This is a huge theoretical question, which cannot be answered by this small study. Further empirical studies are indispensable in evaluating the findings in this study and in exploring the mechanism of class reproduction in a transforming society.

Another implication is that the diversification of transitional Chinese society and the



corresponding diversified social forces are gradually transforming the power-structure of the society. As is shown in the stories of migrant children, social actors from market and civil society sectors are becoming active and forceful in resolving social problems and to strive for social justice. Their efforts are helping to resolve the social problem of educating migrant children and to strive for social justice. Further studies are needed to explore how these social forces, which includes civil society, in diversified transitional Chinese society Operate to enhance the life-chances of migrant children, and thereby the human condition in a society experiencing vast transformation.

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## Appendix I: Profile of informants

### 1. The profile of 22 migrant children under study

No.	Name	Gender	Age	Hometown	Years in Beijing	Parents' occupation	Number of siblings	Further education
#1	ZZ	Male	13	Hubei	10	Small business	1	Back to hometown
#2	ZJ	Male	14	Sichuan	3	Small business	2	Migrant school
#3	LYQ	Male	13	Hebei	1.5	Cleaners	1	Back to hometown
#4	ZHJ	Male	14	Henan	5	Construction worker	2	Public school in Beijing
#5	LTY	Male	12	Sichuan	2	Driver	0	Back to hometown
#6	YLW	Male	13	Shandong	3	Small business	1	Public school in Beijing
#7	CZH	Male	14	Anhui	2	Small business	1	Back to hometown
#8	ZZY	Male	13	Shandong	2	Driver	1	Migrant school
#9	LX	Male	14	Hebei	3	Small business	0	Back to hometown
#10	ZP	Male	13	Hubei	5	Workers	1	Back to hometown
#11	LZY	Male	13	Hubei	2	Small business	2	Back to hometown
#12	FL	Female	14	Sichuan	2	Construction worker	2	Public school in Beijing
#13	HF	Female	13	Anhui	3	Decoration	0	Migrant school
#14	QJJ	Female	14	Shandong	2	Decoration	3	Migrant school
#15	WH	Female	14	Hebei	5	Decoration	0	Migrant school
#16	DH	Female	12	Henan	5	Decoration	1	Migrant school



#17	GCY	Female	14	Henan	3	Small business	2	Migrant school
#18	ZXX	Female	14	Anhui	2	Construction worker	2	Back to hometown
#19	SAM	Female	13	Henan	2	Construction worker	3	Back to hometown
#20	YJW	Female	13	Henan	3	Small business	1	Migrant school
#21	Jing	Female	15	Anhui	2	Small business	2	Back to hometown
#22	SW	Female	13	Chongqing	3	Small business	1	Back to hometown

## **2. The profile of five teachers in the study**

No.	Name	Gender	Age	Hometown	Marriage	Education	Years of teaching
#23	Liu	Female	23	Jilin	Single	College	2
#24	Fu	Male	23	Liaoning	Single	College	2
#25	Li	Female	42	Shanxi	Married	High school	20
#26	Shi	Female	35	Jiangsu	Married	College	13
#27	Gu	Female	27	Beijing	Single	High school	1

## **3. The profile of other informants in the study**

No.	Name	Gender	Age	Hometown	Education	Occupation
#28	LSM	Female	40	Henan	High school	Owner and headmaster of a migrant school
#29	WB	Male	35	Beijing	Master	Headmaster of a public school
#30	GB	Male	41	Shanxi	College	President of a grassroots NGO
#31	LX	Female	36	Henan	College	President of a grassroots NGO
#32	WQ	Male	32	Henan	College	Officer of the Trade Union of XY

## **Appendix II: Main Questions Used in Interviews with Informants**

### **1 Questions Used in Interviews with Migrant Children**

- 1.1 Could you please introduce you family members?
- 1.2 What do your parents do?
- 1.3 Could you tell me the history of you?
- 1.4 How do you think of Beijing? Could you compare Beijing with your home-village?
- 1.5 How do you think of native people of Beijing?
- 1.6 Can you describe a day of your common life in Beijing?
- 1.7 How do you think of your parents and your teachers?
- 1.8 Who have ever helped you? How did they help you?
- 1.9 What do you want to do when you grow up?

### **2 Questions Used in Interviews with Migrant Children's Parents**

- 2.1 Can you tell me your migrating history?
- 2.2 What is your expectation for your children?
- 2.3 What is your plan for the education of your children?
- 2.4 What kinds of supports have you received from the society?
- 2.5 What are the major difficulties for you in Beijing?
- 2.6 What are the major difficulties for the education of your children?

### **3 Questions Used in Interview with Teachers in Migrant Children Schools**

- 3.1 How many jobs have you done? Do you like your current job? Why do you work here?
- 3.2 What do you think of migrant children? What are the major problems with them?
- 3.3 What do you think of migrant school? What are the major problems with this kind of school?
- 3.4 What do you think of students' parents? How is the interaction with them?
- 3.5 What kinds of supports have you received from the society? What kinds of support our school received from the society?

### **4 Questions Used in Interviews with the owners of Migrant School**

- 4.1 What did you do before you found this school?
- 4.2 Why did you set up this school?
- 4.3 What do you think of migrant children? What are the major problems with them?
- 4.4 What are the major difficulties you face in running this school? What kinds of support do you want to get from the society?
- 4.5 What kinds of supports you have received from the society? Could you tell me more details of these supports?
- 4.6 How is the interaction with local government?
- 4.7 What kind strategies have you employed in competing with other migrant schools?
- 4.8 Do you have some co-operations with other migrant schools? Do you have some co-operations with local public schools?
- 4.9 What do you think of the future of migrant school?

## Appendix III: Survey Questionnaire

### Statement of Consent

*Before you proceed to fill out the questionnaire about life insurance agents, please read the following statements carefully, and make sure you agree with them. After you sign the statement of consent, please return this page first, and then start to fill out the questionnaire:*

**I have been told by the investigator about what this research is and what it is for.**

**I fully understand this research's nature and purpose. I understand this research is anonymous, and all data collected are only be used in the investigator's thesis research.**

**I would like to participate in this research based on my knowledge and experience.**

---

**Respondents'**

**Signature .....Date.....**

**Name (PRINT).....**



Department of Sociology,  
Faculty of Arts and Social  
Science

## Survey Questionnaire on Migrant Children

Dear students:

This questionnaire in your hand is to know the experiences, situations, feelings, and difficulties of migrant children in Beijing. This survey is anonymous and all the information you fill in it will be kept confidential. Your information is very important; please answer all these questions carefully. All the data collected will be used only in my research. Thank you for your participation.

Investigator: CHEN BAOGANG

Department of Sociology, National University of Singapore

July, 2006

### **Part I : Migrating Experience**

This section is designed to learn your experience of migration. Please read every question carefully, and choose the appropriate number most suitable for your situation. Please bear in mind that there is no standard or correct answer for every question.

- Q1** How many places have you ever lived in?
- ☐ 1
  - ☐ 2
  - ☐ 3
  - ☐ 4
  - ☐ more than 4

- Q2** How long have been living in Beijing?
- ☐ Less than 1 year
  - ☐ 1-2 years
  - ☐ 3-5 years
  - ☐ 6-8 years
  - ☐ More than 8 years

- Q3** Have you ever been separate with your parents?
- ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No

- Q4** How many places have you ever lived in Beijing?
- ☐ 1
  - ☐ 2
  - ☐ 3
  - ☐ 4
  - ☐ More than 4

- Q15** How many schools have ever study in Beijing?
- ☐ 1
  - ☐ 2
  - ☐ 3
  - ☐ 4
  - ☐ More than 4
- Q6** Have you ever studied in public schools in Beijing?
- ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
- Q7** Where will you have secondary schooling when you graduate?
- ☐ Migrant school in Beijing
  - ☐ Public school in Beijing
  - ☐ Public school in hometown
  - ☐ Private boarding school
  - ☐ I will not have secondary schooling.

## **Part II : Family life**

I would like to know your feelings of your family life. Please tick the appropriate response for each of the following questions.

- Q8** Do you feel happy when you are with your family?
- ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
- Q9** How about the relationship between you and your father?
- ☐ Very good
  - ☐ Good
  - ☐ Normal
  - ☐ Bad
  - ☐ Very bad
- Q10** How about the relationship between you and your mother?
- ☐ Very good
  - ☐ Good
  - ☐ Normal
  - ☐ Bad
  - ☐ Very bad
- Q11** How about the relationship between your father and mother?
- ☐ Very good
  - ☐ Good
  - ☐ Normal
  - ☐ Bad
  - ☐ Very bad
- Q12** Who can understand you better between your parents?
- ☐ Father
  - ☐ Mother
  - ☐ Same
- Q13** Do you often do housework?
- ☐ Very often
  - ☐ Often
  - ☐ Sometimes
  - ☐ Seldom

☐ Never

### **Part III: Social Support**

This section is about the social support you ever received. Please tick the appropriate choice based on your real experience.

<b>Q14</b>	Have you ever received social support?	<input type="radio"/> Yes (Please continue to answer Q15-Q19) <input type="radio"/> No (Please jump over Q15-Q19)
<b>Q15</b>	What kind of social support have you ever received? ( <i>You can choose more than one answer.</i> )	<input type="checkbox"/> Money donated to my family <input type="checkbox"/> Visit to place of interests <input type="checkbox"/> Stationery <input type="checkbox"/> Scholarship <input type="checkbox"/> Others: _____ ( <i>Please fill in</i> ) <input type="checkbox"/> School <input type="checkbox"/> Community <input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> NGOs <input type="checkbox"/> Others: _____ ( <i>Please fill in</i> )
<b>Q16</b>	Where did you get your support? ( <i>You can choose more than one answer.</i> )	<input type="radio"/> Very much <input type="radio"/> Much <input type="radio"/> Some <input type="radio"/> A little <input type="radio"/> None
<b>Q17</b>	How much did these social supports improve your life?	<input type="radio"/> Chances to study in public school in Beijing <input type="radio"/> Money <input type="radio"/> Stationery <input type="radio"/> Chances of visiting places of interests <input type="radio"/> Others: _____ ( <i>Please fill in</i> )
<b>Q18</b>	What kinds of social support do you need most?	<input type="radio"/> Very much <input type="radio"/> Much <input type="radio"/> Some <input type="radio"/> A little <input type="radio"/> None

### **Part IV: Social Contact**

This section is about your relationship with and attitude of various social actors in your life. Please tick the appropriate response.

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Frequently	Very Frequently
	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Q19</b> When you are unhappy, you talk with others.	1	2	3	4	5

<b>Q20</b>	You bully others.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Q21</b>	You are bullied by others.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Q22</b>	You are misunderstood by classmates.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Q23</b>	You are misunderstood by teachers.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Q24</b>	You are misunderstood by parents.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Q25</b>	You go home with friends.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Q26</b>	You feel lonely.	1	2	3	4	5

### **Part V : Profile**

This section collects data on personal information, which is important for my study. All the data will be definitely kept confidential.

<b>Q27</b>	What is your gender?	<input type="radio"/> Male	<input type="radio"/> Female
<b>Q28</b>	How old are you?	<input type="radio"/> 11 <input type="radio"/> 12 <input type="radio"/> 13 <input type="radio"/> 14 <input type="radio"/> 15 and above	
<b>Q29</b>	How many siblings do you have?	<input type="radio"/> 0 <input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 and above	

Congratulations for finishing the survey!  
 Thank you very much for participating in this survey 😊